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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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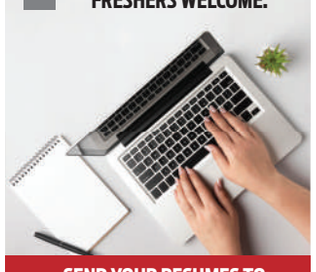

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CAG reveals ₹2,026 cr loss in Delhi excise policy scam

Rs 890 cr was lost from govt's failure to re-tender licences

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Ahead of Delhi Assembly elections on 5 February, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report alleged that liquor policy scam costed the Delhi government's loss of Rs 2,026 crore. The report points to lapses, lack of transparency and deviations from policy objectives.

This is the first time a financial estimate has been presented regarding the alleged irregularities surrounding the excise policy.

Introduced by AAP in November 2021, the policy was aimed at restructuring Delhi's liquor retail market. However, CAG report suggests that the policy failed to meet its intended goals. It also notes that key recommendations from an expert panel were ignored by the Group of Ministers (GoM), which was led by then-deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia.

Additionally, the report alleges that certain AAP leaders may have benefited from kickbacks associated with the policy. This has led to investigations by Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation, resulting in the arrest of the then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, Sisodia, and MP Sanjay Singh, all of whom were later granted bail.

The then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal his deputy Sisodia were arrested in the cases and later granted bail **PHOTO: PTI**

Among the major findings of the report are serious irregularities in the issuance and renewal of liquor licenses. The CAG found that several bidders, including those with poor financial standing or complaints against them, were allowed to participate in the tender process. In some cases, entities that reported financial losses were still granted licenses or allowed to renew existing ones.

Key issues highlighted in the report include: Retail licenses were retained by some vendors throughout the policy period, while others surrendered theirs prematurely. The government failed to re-tender these surrendered licenses, leading to an estimated revenue loss of Rs 890 crore.

Exemptions granted to zonal licensees resulted in a revenue shortfall of Rs 941 crore.

The government waived Rs 144 crore in license fees for zonal licensees under the pretext of Covid-19 restrictions. However, the tender document explicitly stated that licencees were responsible for commercial risks, and there was no provision for a force majeure clause. *—ANI*

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Kejri alleges BJP MPs getting fake votes made

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday alleged that the BJP was adding new voters in the New Delhi constituency from across the country using the party MPs' and ministers' addresses to manipulate the electoral roll ahead of the upcoming elections.

In a letter to the Election Commission, Kejriwal accused BJP leaders of engaging in "backdoor tactics" to tamper with the voter list. He claimed that the alleged manipulation could alter the constituency's voter composition significantly, calling the practice "even worse than the booth-capturing practices of the past."

In his letter, Kejriwal wrote, "The BJP is transferring votes from across the country to the New Delhi Assembly using addresses of its own MPs and Ministers." *—PTI*

BEATEN TO DEATH

Bidar Dalit man killed over affair with upper-caste girl

BIDAR, 11 JAN

A 19-year-old Dalit youth succumbed to injuries sustained in an alleged attack over his relationship with an upper-caste girl at Rakshiya village in Kamalanagar taluk of Bidar district. Police have taken the girl's father and brother into custody.

Sumith, a BSc student from Bedakunda village, was in a relationship with a girl from Rakshyal village. The girl called Sumith to her house on 5 January. Upon his arrival, he was allegedly assaulted by her father, Kishanrao, her brother, Rahul, and other relatives, according to sources. The attack continued after Sumith left the house, with Rahul and his friends targeting him again.

The assailants later contacted Sumith's family, instructing them to take him. Sumith's father and uncle found him severely injured. They took him to the government hospital in Thana Kushnoor and subsequently shifted him to a hospital in Latur district, Maharashtra, for advanced treatment. Despite the medical care provided, Sumith succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday.

Sumith **PHOTO: SALAR**

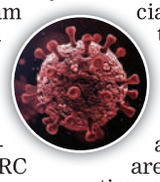
- An FIR was registered against Rahul and Kishanrao under sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, at Kushnoor police station. Sumith's parents staged a protest outside the hospital.

An FIR was registered against Rahul and Kishanrao under sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, at Kushnoor police station. Sumith's parents staged a protest outside the hospital, demanding action against the accused. *—Salar News*

HMPV cases reported in Assam, Guj, Puducherry

DIBRUGARH/GUJARAT, 11 JAN

A 10-month-old child has become the first patient this season in Assam diagnosed with human metapneumovirus (HMPV) infection. The infant, who displayed cold-related symptoms, is currently being treated at Assam Medical College and Hospital, where he is reported to be stable. Hospital officials confirmed the diagnosis after routine tests conducted by the ICMR-RMRC in Lahowal.



In Gujarat, a nine-month-old boy in Ahmedabad has tested positive for HMPV, marking the state's fourth case within a week. He was admitted to a private hospital after suffering from respiratory symptoms. Earlier cases included an 80-year-old man and an eight-year-old boy, highlighting the virus's impact across various age groups.

Meanwhile, in Puducherry, a three-year-old child has fully recovered from HMPV, becoming the region's first confirmed case. Following treatment at a private hospital, the child was discharged, with health officials assuring the public that precautions are in place, including dedicated wards for potential cases.

Health authorities across all three regions are monitoring the situation closely and emphasising that along with HMPV, similar respiratory infections can typically be mild and self-limiting, requiring no cause for alarm. As awareness efforts continue, officials remind the public to practice respiratory hygiene to prevent further spread. *—PTI*

KNOW YOUR ARMY

A personnel of the Corps of Military Police performs during a Know Your Army at the Manekshaw Parade Ground, in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD** ***>>>More on Page 2***

TN gets spl courts for sexual offences against women

CHENNAI, 11 JAN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Saturday announced setting up of 7 special courts to try sexual offences against women and a special committee to be led by a police officer in districts for expeditious handling of such cases.

Stalin also said that Tamil Nadu Prion Rules will be amended suitably to not permit premature release of prisoners, convicted for sexual offences.

He said special courts would be newly set up in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Chennai and Chennai suburbs for exclusive trial of cases involving sexual offences against women.

He asserted that the police department was functioning independently in his regime; stern action was being taken against rowdy elements and crimes have been prevented on a large scale. The Assembly adopted amendment Bills providing for more severe punishments for rape, than provided in the central law, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, against the backdrop of the sexual assault of a varsity student here in December 2024. *—PTI*

Indian economy weak in 2025: IMF

WASHINGTON, 11 JAN

The Indian economy is expected to be "a little weaker" in 2025 despite steady global growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said. Georgieva also said she expects quite a lot of uncertainty in the world this year mainly around the trade policy of the US. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

41 police inspectors transferred in State

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

Karnataka Police department ordered the transfer of more than 41 police inspectors across districts, including 12 from Bengaluru. Balakrishna R from Sheshadripuram Police Station, Manju KM from Hebbagodi Police Station, Harish V from JP Nagar Police Station and Harish MR from Central Crime Branch are among the transferred police inspectors from Bengaluru. orders were released late on Friday night. *—Salar News*

Principal asks 80 girls to undress

DHANBAD, 11 JAN

The principal of a private school in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district was accused of ordering 80 girls of class 10 to remove their shirts for writing messages on them, prompting the administration to initiate an inquiry, an official said on Saturday. The girls were allegedly forced to return home in their blazers without shirts beneath. The incident took place in a prestigious school in Digwadih under Jorapokhar police station area on Friday. *—PTI*

Several trapped as roof collapses in UP rly stn

KANNAUJ, 11 JAN

A building under construction at Kannauj railway station collapsed on Saturday afternoon, trapping approximately two dozen workers beneath the rubble, according to a senior official.

So far, six workers have been rescued and transported to hospital. Initial footage from the scene depicted a chaotic environment, with dust clouds and debris as bystanders attempted to assist those trapped.

District Magistrate Shubhrant Kumar Shukl reported that the incident occurred when the shuttering used for the roof's construction failed, leading to the collapse. "Our top priority is the rescue of the trapped workers. We are deploying every resource available for the operation," he stated, having arrived at the site alongside other senior officials to oversee the rescue efforts. Mahesh Kumar, a worker present at the scene, said : "As soon as the concrete was poured over the shuttering, it suddenly gave way. Everyone on it fell." *—PTI*

Rescue operation underway after an under-construction building collapsed at Kannauj railway station **PHOTO: PTI**

Attacks against Hindus not communal: B'desh

DHAKA, 11 JAN

A vast majority of incidents against the minority communities since 4 August last year were 'political in nature' and not 'communal,' Bangladesh government said on Saturday quoting a police report.

Police have set up a WhatsApp number to directly receive complaints of communal violence and maintain contact with the minority community.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' press wing said here that the police investigation came after the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council recently claimed that there were 2,010 incidents of communal violence since a day before deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country on 5 August following a massive student-led protest that toppled her 16-year regime.

Of these, a total of 1,769 incidents were reported as attacks and vandalism; police have so far registered 62 cases on the merits of the claims, and arrested at least 35 culprits based on the investigation, the CA office's press wing statement said. *—PTI*

'FOR REFUSING TO COHABIT'

Husband can't deny aid to estranged wife: SC

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that a woman can claim maintenance from her husband even if she refuses to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights, provided she has valid reasons for doing so.

The bench, led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar, addressed whether a husband is absolved from paying maintenance if his wife does not abide by the decree. It concluded that there is no hard and fast rule, and the decision must depend on the specific facts of each case.

- The case involved a couple from Jharkhand, married in 2014 and estranged in 2015. The husband sought restitution of conjugal rights.

The bench highlighted that while Section 125(4) of the CrPC prohibits maintenance for wives who refuse to cohabit despite a decree, high courts have offered conflicting views.

After analysing case law, the bench ruled that the mere non-compliance with a decree is not sufficient to deny maintenance. Instead, it must be determined whether the wife has valid reasons for her refusal.

The case involved a couple from Jharkhand, married in 2014 and estranged in 2015. The husband sought restitution of conjugal rights, claiming his wife left their home due to dowry demands and mistreatment. The wife contended she was ill-treated and unable to use basic facilities at home. Despite the family court granting the husband's decree in 2022, the wife filed for maintenance, which the court awarded.

High Court later ruled against maintenance, but Supreme Court overturned this decision, citing the wife's valid reasons for refusing to cohabit. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Bengaluru metro service to begin early on Mondays

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has announced an adjustment to its operational hours every Monday to improve early morning connectivity to the City Railway Station and Bus Station. This initiative is designed to assist passengers returning to the city during the early hours. From 13 January, metro services will now begin at 4.15am on Mondays, replacing the usual schedule of 5am. The updated timing is anticipated to offer seamless travel options for commuters arriving by train or bus in the early morning. *—Salar News*

Panchamasali group to renew quota protest on 14 Jan

BELAGAVI, 11 JAN

Basava Jaya Mruthyunjaya Swami, the seer of Kudala Sangama Mutt, announced that the Lingayat Panchamasali community's ongoing fight for a 2A reservation will enter its 8th phase, beginning 14 January, at Kudala Sangama. Speaking at a media conference in Belagavi on Saturday, Swamiji outlined the plans for the next phase of the struggle, focusing on the outline of the 8th phase and a pledge revolution. The event will be held at the Panchamasali Peetha in Kudalasangama. Swamiji emphasised that the community has been fighting for their rightful reservation for a long time. He condemned the police lathicharge on peaceful protesters during the last Winter Legislature Session in Belagavi in December, calling the incident an act of injustice. *—Salar News*

18 workers fall ill after leakage of chemical in Karwar

KARWAR, 11 JAN

A total of 18 workers of Aditya Birla Group's Grasim Industries Limited at Karwar taluk in Uttara Kannada district were hospitalised after a chemical leaked on Saturday evening. The workers, who are from Karnataka, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, were taken to Karwar Government Hospital after being treated in the industry's hospital. Deputy Superintendent of Police Girish said the leaked chemical has been sent to Forensic Laboratory for identification. "The victims are recovering and they will be discharged on Sunday," he said. The residents of Binaga village held a protest in front of the industry as it did not alert them about the leakage. They urged police to initiate action against the industry. *—Salar News*

Drug kingpin held after being shot at in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 11 JAN

In a significant operation against drug trafficking, Kalaburagi police arrested their 51st suspect, a drug kingpin of a peddler gang, on Saturday after shooting a round of pistol bullet in the leg during a confrontation. Suprit was apprehended on the outskirts of Tavaragera after he attempted to evade a vehicle check, accelerating his car in a bid to escape. In the ensuing chaos, Suprit allegedly lunged at officers with a knife. In self-defence, Inspector Raghavendra discharged a round from his service pistol, hitting Suprit in the left leg. Constable Gurumurthy was injured during the knife attack and has been admitted to a private hospital in Kalaburagi, while Suprit is being treated at the Kalaburagi government hospital. *—Salar News*

CM post: Shivakumar rules out any 'political turn'

Deputy Chief Minister says he will follow party's direction

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 11 JAN

Karnataka's Deputy Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar, sought to minimise speculation surrounding the ongoing power tussle within the Congress party, asserting that both he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will continue to operate under the directives of the party's high command. Speaking to reporters during his visit, Shivakumar emphasised that the people of Karnataka have shown their support for the ruling party and expressed confidence in their administration for the full five-year term.

Amidst cheers from supporters dubbing him the "next Chief Minister," Shivakumar insisted that he does not seek anyone's backing or demands for his elevation to the top post. "All discussions about political shifts are without merit," he stated. He also quoted the saying: "Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana," reinforcing his commitment to his duties over ambitions.

Speculation has intensified in Congress about a rumoured "rotational chief minister" formula between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar *PHOTO: PTI*

Speculation has intensified within Congress about a potential shift in leadership following reports of a rumoured "rotational chief minister" formula after March, leading to discussions of Shivakumar possibly stepping into the Chief Minister role. Tensions have been heightened by various comments and meetings among party colleagues, with some suggesting Shivakumar should focus on leading the party into the next elections instead of pursuing immediate leadership aspirations.

Shivakumar has been transparent about his ambition but remained focused on party unity and direction. In response to media criticism over his frequent temple visits, he articulated his belief in personal faith, underscoring that his devotional practices are rooted in his commitment to the welfare of the state and its citizens. Shivakumar's statements highlight a focus on stability within the Congress. *—PTI*

Police found one AK-56 rifle, three .303 rifles, a 12-bore SBBL gun, a country-made pistol, and 176 rounds of ammunition *PHOTO: X*

Maoist arms seized in Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 11 JAN

The Karnataka police have recovered a cache of arms and ammunition in a forest area near Chikkamagaluru, believed to be connected to Maoists who recently surrendered. Superintendent of Police (SP) Vikram Amathe confirmed that investigations are underway to determine whether the items were indeed left behind by the surrendering Maoists.

On Wednesday evening, a group of six Maoists surrendered to authorities in Bengaluru, with the event attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The group includes members from various regions, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

Late on Friday, a case was registered at Jayapura police station under several sections of the Arms Act of 1959. Following up on intelligence, police teams searched the forest area in Kittaleguli within Koppa taluk and discovered one AK-56 rifle, three .303 rifles, a 12-bore SBBL gun, a country-made pistol, and 176 rounds of ammunition.

SP Amathe indicated that while some seized firearms may bear symbols linked to Maoist groups, further investigation is required to verify their origins. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) will lead the inquiry.

The surrendered Maoists have not yet disclosed the location of their weapons, as noted by Home Minister G. Parameshwara. *—PTI*

Annamalai questions Naxals' surrender policy

UDUPI, 11 JAN

Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai has raised concerns over the Naxal surrender and rehabilitation policy in State, questioning its effectiveness and transparency.

Annamalai, who had served as Superintendent of Police (SP) in Udupi between January 2015 and August 2016 and as SP Chikkamagaluru, considered a hotbed of Naxals, in 2018, convened a press conference in Udupi on Saturday.

According to him, while the policy aims to reintegrate former Naxals into mainstream society, doubts persist regarding its implementation.

He pointed out that surrender and encounter cases have sparked widespread speculation, with many questioning the circumstances under which these events unfolded.

Annamalai also questioned the credibility of the surrender process, stating that the government's approach could create doubts about the policy's integrity.

He cited the case of Vikram Gowda's encounter, which has triggered concerns among locals.

"There are reports that the Chief Minister himself was involved in the surrender process, and weapons were displayed in a remote forested location," he added. *—PTI*

GT Devegowda to skip JD(S) meet

MYSURU, 11 JAN

JD(S) State Core Committee Chairman GT Devegowda on Saturday said he will skip Sunday's party meeting in Bengaluru called to select the new president for party's State unit.

GT Devegowda *PHOTO: PTI*

The Chamundeshwari MLA said he is now 75 years old and is not able to tour the State much as his age does not permit him. Devegowda said he will not be able to take part in the meeting as he is taking part in the events in his Assembly constituency, and does not want to be involved in party's organisational issues.

"I am not miffed with anyone. I do not have any displeasure against any individuals in the party. Due to health reasons, I am not able to take part in the meeting," he said.

Former prime minister HD Devegowda, former chief minister and Union minister HD Kumaraswamy will decide and select a new party chief for the State in the meeting.

As his son Hunsur MLA GD Harishgowda is a close friend of NikhilKumaraswamy, he has favoured the latter for the post and there is nothing wrong in his statement, he said. About Minister Satish Jharkhiholi and Kumaraswamy airing their chief ministerial ambitions for 2028, he said: "I am not an astrologer to predict who will become next CM. In the current political atmosphere in the State," he said. *—Salar News*

COMPLAINT AGAINST DEVEGOWDA

MYSURU, 11 JAN

RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna has filed a complaint against State JD(S) core committee President GT Devegowda with Lokayukta for allegedly helping his daughter and son-in-law to obtain two MUDA sites under 50:50 scheme by misusing his official powers.

Chamundeshwari MLA Devegowda allegedly helped land owner K Chowdaiah to obtain six sites of various measurements from Mysore Urban Development Authority MUDA under 50:50 scheme, Krishna alleged. The sites were registered in the name of Chowdaiah on 19 October, 2023. Of the six sites, two of 50X80 measurement bearing the site numbers 12257 and 12259 in Vijayanagar fourth stage, second main, in the city were registered in the name of Devegowda's daughter D Annapurna and his son-in-law GM Vishweshwaraiah on 11 November, 2023. These two sites were registered within 19 days of MUDA granting six sites, the MUDA case complainant alleged.

Krishna asked Lokayukta to initiate action against the MLA. *—Salar News*

PRESS CLUB AWARDS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, who was honoured by Press Club of Bengaluru during its annual awards' ceremony, on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Service extension is misplaced: VP

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar delivered a pointed message on Saturday during the inaugural address at the 25th National Conference of Chairpersons of State Public Service Commissions, emphasising the importance of integrity and fairness in public services.

Dhankhar argued that extensions of service for individuals reflect a misplaced notion of indispensability, suggesting that such practices can undermine those waiting for their chance. "Talent abounds in this country. No one is indispensable," he asserted, calling on public service commissions to remain firm in their principles.

VP Jagdeep Dhankhar at National Conference of Chairpersons of State Public Service Commissions in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: SALAR*

The Vice President cautioned against appointments influenced by patronage or ideology, stating that the essence of the Constitution must prevail. He condemned post-retirement recruitment practices, labelling them "antithetical" to constitutional ideals, and raised concerns about the "menace" of paper leaks in examinations, calling it an industry that needs to be curbed.

Acknowledging the Government's efforts with the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, Dhankhar emphasised that a harmonious political atmosphere is crucial for national progress. "Our polity is too divisive and polarised," he warned, underscoring the necessity for dialogue among all political factions.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah echoed these sentiments, highlighting the historical significance of Public Service Commissions as pillars of democracy. He underscored the state's commitment to tackling challenges recruitment processes. The event was attended by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot. *—PTI*

Press Club honours exemplary personalities

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

Deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly Rudrappa Lamani was conferred with 'Pride of Karnataka' award by Press Club of Bengaluru (PCB) on Saturday. "I will continue to serve the people of Karnataka with responsibility and dedication," Lamani said.

The press club hosted its annual awards ceremony on Saturday, honouring 50 individuals from various fields for their contributions. The awardees include Bengaluru Deputy Commissioner of Police D Devaraju IPS, social activists Prasad Babu and Basalingaiah Rudraiah Hiremath, and DS Max Managing Director Dayananda SP.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar presented the awards, with Shivajinagar constituency MLA Rizwan Arshad also in attendance.

Highlighting the significance of the event, PCB President Sridhar noted, "Every year, the Press Club honours journalists and media professionals for their exceptional service. This year, we decided to broaden the scope and recognise individuals from diverse fields for their exemplary service."

Shivakumar urged journalists to uphold the integrity of their profession. *—Salar News*

Mysuru artistes to be at R-Day parade

MYSURU, 11 JAN

The artistes of Natana School of Theatre Arts, Ramakrishna Nagar in Mysuru were selected to perform in the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on 26 January.

The tableau of Karnataka depicting its archaeology and Lakkundi Temple, designed by art director Shashidhar Adapa, has been selected for the parade. The artistes of Natana will perform in the parade. The works on the tableau and rehearsal of the artistes have begun. *—Salar News*

KNOW YOUR ARMY

City's inaugural Army Mela shows Indian military strength

BENGALURU, 11 JAN

The IT hub's first encounter with 'Know Your Army' at the Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground here on Saturday was filled with the exhilarating sounds of roaring motorcycles and the awe-inspiring sight of para-motors soaring through the skies.

The Know Your Army Mela 2025, which also showcased combat equipment, including tanks and drones, was organized by the Indian Army to commemorate the 77th Army Day.

It was hosted by the Headquarters Karnataka & Kerala Sub Area in Bengaluru.

One of the crowd-pullers at the mela was the daring performance of the Shwet Ashwa Motorcycle Display Team of the Corps of Military Police.

Know Your Army Mela in Bengaluru showcased combat equipment and featured exhilarating performances by Army personnel *PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD*

The team was established in 1952 at CMP Centre and School in Faizabad and holds three Guinness World Records, including one for carrying 48 members on a single motorcycle in 2010.

On Saturday, their daring display drew gasps from the crowd. The Khukri dance, performed by the 4/8 Gorkha Rifles, was another hit among the visitors. The dance is a vibrant cultural display symbolising the courage and warrior spirit of the Gorkhas.The day featured cultural performances by 2,000 schoolchildren from Army, government, and private schools. *—PTI*

Cops summon AAP MLA in fake docus involving B'deshis

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

The Delhi Police issued a notice to AAP MLA Mohinder Goyal and his staff on Saturday after discovering fake documents during a crackdown on illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. Sources revealed Goyal's signature and seal were found on the forged documents seized. Goyal, representing northwest Delhi's Rithala, will be questioned by senior officers at 5.30pm today. The notice follows a verification drive launched under Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's directive to identify and deport illegal migrants. Over 30 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants have been deported, and a gang providing forged Aadhaar and government IDs was busted. *—Agencies*

Kerala BJP leader PC George booked for hate speech

KOTTAYAM, 11 JAN

Kerala BJP leader PC George has been booked for allegedly making remarks that could incite religious hatred during a television discussion earlier this week. The Erattupetta Police registered a case on Friday following a complaint from the Muslim Youth League Municipal Committee, with George facing charges under various sections of the law. In response, senior BJP figures condemned the police action as a "political vendetta" orchestrated by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government. Prakash Javadekar, the party's Kerala in-charge, stated that George intended to criticise extremism rather than target any specific community. He accused the LDF of failing to confront extremist groups like Hamas. BJP state chief K Surendran echoed these sentiments, asserting that the party would legally and politically challenge the government's actions, which he claims were made under communal pressure. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rijiju to sign deal for Hajj pilgrimage during visit to Saudi

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday embarked on a five-day visit to Saudi Arabia to sign a bilateral agreement for the Hajj pilgrimage of 2025, where India is seeking an additional quota for 10,000 pilgrims. Rijiju is scheduled to meet Saudi Arabian Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah on Monday when the two leaders are expected to sign the bilateral agreement. Rijiju will also meet Saleh Al Jasser, the Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistic Services and discuss Hajj flight operations and the pilgrimage-related bus and train services with him. Rijiju will also visit the Jeddah Haj Terminal, used by Indian pilgrims, where the government has dedicated an office space for facilitation. *—PTI*

Uttarakhand BJP expels 6 rebel leaders

DEHRADUN, 11 JAN

The Uttarakhand BJP on Saturday said it has expelled six rebel leaders who entered the fray for the forthcoming urban local body polls in the state as independents against the party's official nominees. The expulsion orders were issued on Friday. The six rebel leaders have been expelled from the party for six years for anti-party activities on the recommendation of the Uttarakhand BJP president Mahendra Bhatt, said state BJP media incharge Manveer Chauhan. Those expelled include former municipal chairman Bhupendra Singh Chauhan in Barahat, former district president Ummeedchand Shah in Purola, former block president Yashwant Kumar in Naugaon and Shakti Kendra convener Ajay Singh Rawat in Barkot. *—PTI*

CAG report exposes Kejriwal, says BJP

Nadda says AAP model of loot is in full display

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

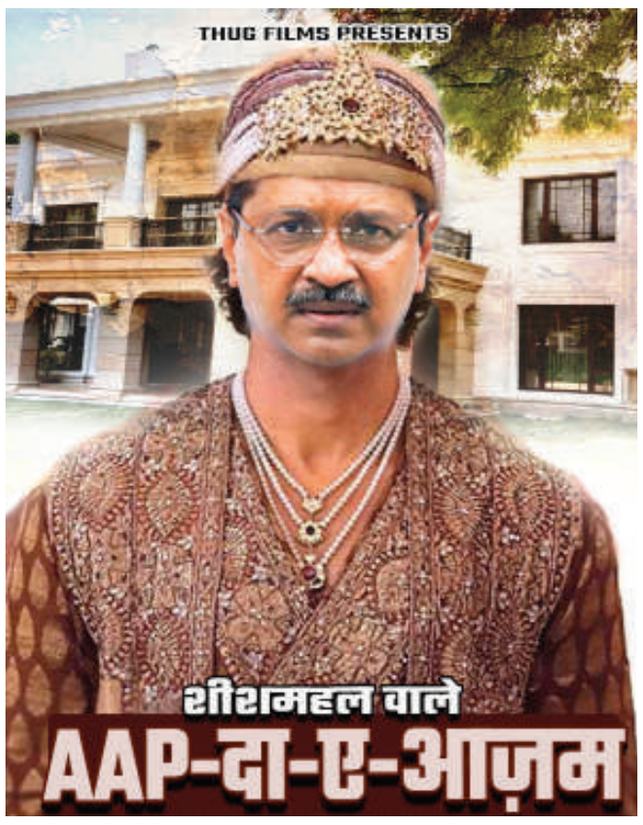
The CAG has projected a loss of Rs 2,026 crore due to the Delhi government's excise policy, and the ruling Aam Aadmi Party has not tabled the report in the assembly to hide its misdeeds, BJP claimed on Saturday.

BJP leader Anurag Thakur told a press conference the CAG report has arrived at 10 major findings about the policy, which was scrapped by the AAP government amid a row, asserting that former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to answer the questions it has raised.

"He will have to say who pocketed the money," Thakur said, alleging that Kejriwal is the kingpin of the scam.

BJP president JP Nadda claimed the CAG report has exposed intentional lapses, leading to a loss of Rs 2,026 crore loss to the exchequer.

Nadda said on X, "Intoxicated by power, high on misgovernance. 'AAP'DA model of loot in full display and that too on something like liquor." He said it is just a matter of a few weeks before the AAP government is voted out and punished for its misdeeds. He alleged, "CAG Report on 'Liquorgate' exposes @ArvindKejriwal and @AamAadmiParty Gov. Intentional 'Lapses' in Policy Implementation. Rs 2026 Cr Loss to Exchequer money." Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia were arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in the case of alleged corruption in framing the excise policy, which was later scrapped. Both were released on bail after spending months behind bars.



BJP released a poster attacking AAP Supremo Arvind Kejriwal, calling him Sheeshmahal wale AAP-da-e-aazam *PHOTO: X/@BJP4DELHI*

BJP releases second list of 29 candidates

BJP on Saturday released its second list of 29 candidates for the Delhi Assembly polls, fielding Kapil Mishra, a former AAP leader now identified with hardline Hindutva politics, from Karawal Nagar.

It has fielded Harish Khurana, son of former Delhi chief minister Madan Lal Khurana, from the Moti Nagar constituency.

With the second list, the party has so far named candidates for 58 seats for the elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly. *—PTI*

Kejri says BJP will pick Bidhuri as CM face

He urges a debate between BJP, AAP's CM pick

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday claimed that BJP has picked former MP Ramesh Bidhuri as its chief ministerial candidate for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections and will soon make the announcement.

Addressing a press conference here, the former chief minister also challenged Bidhuri to a public debate.

"We have come to know from reliable sources that the BJP is going to name Ramesh Bidhuri as its CM candidate in the next one or two days," Kejriwal claimed.

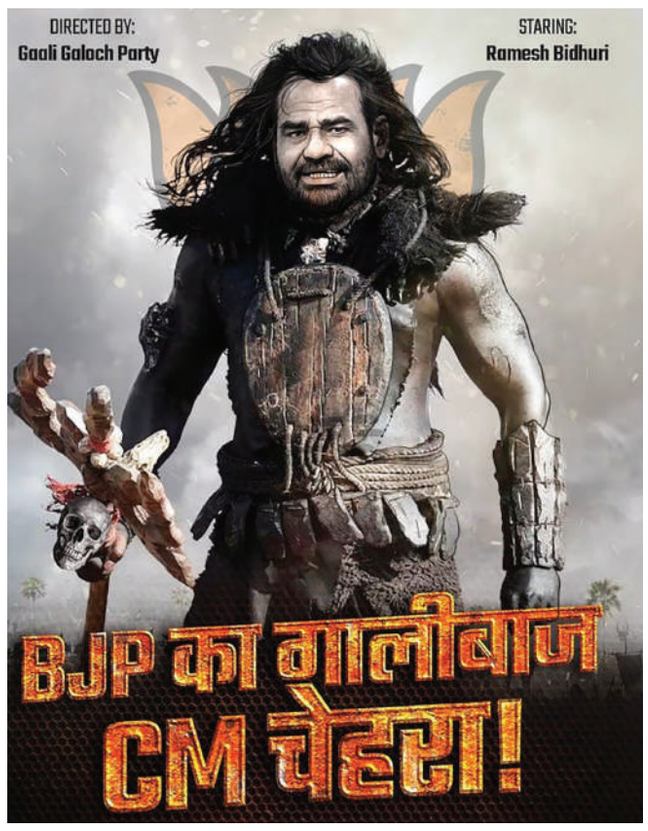
"There should be an open public debate between the chief ministerial candidates of the AAP and the BJP, whether it is Ramesh Bidhuri or anyone else," he said.

The BJP has fielded Bidhuri from Kalkaji assembly constituency. He will take on AAP candidate and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who is seeking re-election from the seat.

On Friday, Atishi also claimed that the BJP was going to name Bidhuri as its CM face and criticised the party for picking a leader who "hurls the most abuses".

Bidhuri's recent remarks about Atishi triggered a controversy. He said Atishi "changed her father" by changing her surname from Marlena to Singh.

He also drew flak for his remarks about Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi. He said he would make roads in his constituency smooth like "Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks". He expressed regret following an uproar.



AAP initiated a fresh attack targeting BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri, with a poster portraying him as Bahubali 1 antagonist *PHOTO: X/ @AAMAADMIPARTY*

AAP leader Priyanka Kakkar on Saturday accused the BJP of fabricating false allegations against the Delhi government and dismissed the party's claims about a CAG report as "manufactured and baseless." Responding to the BJP's claims about the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, Kakkar alleged during a press conference here that the report presented by the BJP was not authentic and had neither been seen by key stakeholders, including the chief minister and the LG, nor listed on the CAG's official website. Kakkar went on to praise Kejriwal, calling him a leader who has transformed Delhi through initiatives. *—PTI*

Sena (UBT) goes solo for local bodies' polls

NAGPUR, 11 JAN

Amid a blame game over the Maha Vikas Aghadi's rout in the state Assembly elections, key constituent Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) on Saturday announced to contest local bodies polls solo, a move raising question mark over the opposition bloc's unity.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said his party will contest the upcoming elections to the various local bodies alone.

PHOTO: ANI

"In an alliance, workers of individual parties don't get opportunities, and it hampers organisational growth. We will contest polls to the Mumbai, Thane, Nagpur and other municipal corporations, zilla parishads and panchayats on our strength," he said.

Hitting out at Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar for indulging in a blame game over the MVA's defeat in the state assembly, Raut said those who don't believe in consensus and compromise have no right to be in an alliance. "We were not able to appoint even a convenor for INDIA bloc. It isn't good. As the largest party of the alliance, it was the Congress's responsibility to convene a meeting," the Sena (UBT) leader said. Reacting to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's remark that he has never mentioned farm loan waivers in his speeches, Raut said, "Even if he hasn't spoken about it. Farm loan waiver and Rs 2,100 for Laadki Bahin beneficiaries are mentioned in the BJP's poll manifesto. These two promises have to be implemented. He is the finance minister in the BJP government, and he will have to do it." *—PTI*

Dark web, cryptocurrency continue to be challenge: Shah

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday that dark web, cryptocurrency, online marketplace and drones continue to be a challenge for the country and these have to be checked by strict measures.

Chairing a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security', Shah also asserted that the country will not allow even a single kg of drugs to be smuggled in or out of the country.

He said the government has not only been successful in eliminating many networks of drugs, but the terrorism linked with them too was also destroyed. He said many cases of narco-terrorism were busted in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and these were major achievements. Shah said a technical solution to these problems have to be found through joint efforts by the states and the central government and technocrats for the country's security and development. He said that in 2024, by seizing drugs worth Rs 16,914 crore, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and police took the biggest action. The conference aims to address the concern of drug trafficking and its impact on security, with a focus on eight states and Union Territories of northern India. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Biren urges Naga leaders to help resolve ethnic crisis

IMPHAL, 11 JAN

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday requested the church, community and other leaders of the Naga community to take a greater role in resolving the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state.

Addressing a programme Senapati district, Singh said "I want to appeal to the Naga communities that a third party is required to resolve the issues. For this, church and community leaders needs to take responsibilities and initiatives." *—PTI*

FROM HIS OWN PISTOL

Ludhiana AAP MLA dies in accidental firing

LUDHIANA, 11 JAN

Gurpreet Bassi Gogi, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and MLA for Ludhiana West, has tragically died from gunshot injuries, with police suggesting the incident may be a case of "accidental fire" involving his own licensed pistol.

According to Joint Commissioner of Police Jaskaran Singh Teja, Gogi sustained a fatal bullet wound to his temple at his residence around 11.30pm. He was immediately taken to Dayanand Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), where doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival.

According to family members, the shooting was accidental, as the bullet was fired from Gogi's own firearm. The police have placed the body in the DMCH mortuary, and a post-mortem examination is scheduled to ascertain further details. The case is currently under investigation.

The news of Gogi's death has sent shockwaves through the political community, prompting several leaders to offer their condolences. "My deepest condolences to the grieving family during this difficult time. May they find the strength to endure this painful loss," said Punjab AAP president Aman Arora in a post on X. Just hours before the incident, Gogi had participated in a meeting with Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan and AAP MP Balbir Singh Seechewal, addressing the pressing issue of cleaning the 'Budha Nalla.'

Gogi, who defected from Congress to AAP in 2022, won the Ludhiana West seat, defeating two-time MLA Bharat Bhushan Ashu. His wife, Sukhchain Kaur Gogi, recently ran for the municipal corporation elections but was unsuccessful. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

- Gogi, who defected from Congress to AAP in 2022, won the Ludhiana West seat, defeating two-time MLA Bharat Bhushan Ashu

Vijay corners Stalin, DMK for not scrapping NEET

CHENNAI, 11 JAN

Actor-politician Vijay criticised the ruling DMK government a day after Chief Minister and party president MK Stalin admitted that only the Union government holds the authority to scrap NEET, a significant issue in Tamil Nadu. Vijay accused the DMK of deceiving the public with false promises, particularly on the controversial National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical admissions.

Quoting a famous song from an MGR film in a social media post, Vijay asked, "How long will they deceive us in this country, our own country?" He alleged that the ruling party's strategy is to gain votes by making false assurances during elections and failing to fulfil them once in power.Vijay pointed to NEET as a major example, highlighting that during the 2021 Assembly elections, the DMK had promised to abolish the test and claimed to have a clear plan to do so. Now, the government's admission that only the central government can scrap NEET, he said, amounts to betrayal of the people who voted for them based on these promises.

- Vijay concluded by asserting that the DMK's attempts to mislead the public with lies would no longer succeed, as the people are growing increasingly aware of such tactics

Vijay concluded by asserting that the DMK's attempts to mislead the public with lies would no longer succeed, as the people are growing increasingly aware of such tactics. *—Agencies*

'UNABLE TO ACCEPT TN'S PROGRESS'

Stalin terms Guv's actions 'childish'

CHENNAI, 11 JAN

The ongoing tension between Tamil Nadu's Governor RN Ravi and Chief Minister MK Stalin escalated in the Legislative Assembly, with Stalin criticising the Governor's refusal to deliver his customary address during the session as "childish."

The Assembly proceedings have become increasingly contentious since Ravi assumed office, with Stalin highlighting the Governor's habit of entering the Assembly but departing without making a speech. He referred to this behaviour as a "planned violation" of Article 176 of the Constitution, which mandates the Governor to address the Assembly at the start of each session.

Stalin recalled that Ravi delivered an address in 2022 but subsequently cited "absurd" reasons for abstaining from this duty in the following years. He remarked that the Governor appeared unable to accept Tamil Nadu's progress and accused him of undermining the dignity of the Assembly and disrespecting the sentiments of the people.

TN CM Stalin made his remarks following an incident where Ravi left the Assembly in deep anguish after national anthem was not played *PHOTO: PTI*

Stalin made his remarks following an incident on 6 January, where Ravi left the Assembly in "deep anguish" after the national anthem was not played. The Governor, responding to the situation, stated that "disrespecting the Constitution does not augur well for democracy."

Additionally, during the session, opposition AIADMK members protested wearing black shirts in light of a recent assault case involving Anna University students.

Stalin challenged the AIADMK to show similar defiance against the Governor, who he claimed insulted the state.

Following tensions regarding comments on police action in the Pollachi sexual assault case, Speaker M Appavu confirmed that the Chief Minister had provided accurate information regarding the filing of the FIR. The House was later adjourned sine die amidst ongoing protests from AIADMK members. *—PTI*

Lord Hanuman's idol vandalised in UP, FIR registered

BALLIA, 11 JAN

An idol of Lord Hanuman in a temple here was vandalised by unidentified persons, police said on Saturday. An FIR has been registered in the matter. The incident took place in the Golbazar locality in the Sikandarpur police station area on Friday evening, they said. Station House Officer (SHO) Vikas Chandra Pandey said the mace of Lord Hanuman's idol in the temple was broken. As soon as the information about the incident was received, police reached the spot and got the damaged idol repaired, he said. Pandey said a case has been registered against unidentified persons on a complaint by Sikandarpur police outpost in-charge Jan Prakash Tiwari. Efforts are being made to arrest the accused. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Curfew imposed in Balasore ahead of eviction drive

BALASORE, 11 JAN

Ahead of an eviction drive against unauthorised occupants from railway land in Odisha's Balasore, the district administration on Saturday imposed curfew in some areas of the district, an official said.

The eviction drive was required as some people have illegally occupied railway land and obstructing the construction of a third line from Narayangarh in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal to Bhadrak, passing through Balasore. "Curfew is hereby imposed in the area from Aradbazar to vegetable market, Haripur to Darji pokhari chak, Kasimila bridge to Fuladi chak, Nuabazar railway gate, Golapola and Nuabazar vegetable market on both sides of the road from 4 am to 10 pm on 11.01.2025 and 4 am to 10 pm on 12.01.2025," Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Balasore said in an order. *—PTI*

Dense fog envelops Delhi, 45 trains delayed

NEW DELHI,11 JAN

A thick layer of fog engulfed the national capital on Saturday morning, reducing visibility which impacted train operations, officials said. They said that 45 trains were delayed due to the dense fog. According to the weather department, Safdarjung observed minimum visibility of 50 metre from 12.30am to 1.30am which improved thereafter becoming 200 metre and continues to remain so 7.30am. Several areas witnessed dense fog during the early morning hours. The minimum temperature settled at 7.7 degree Celsius, normal during the season, according to IMD. *—PTI*

Member of banned outfit arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, 11 JAN

A 48-year-old member of the proscribed outfit Hmar People's Convention (Democratic) was arrested in Manipur's Jiribam district and explosive materials were recovered from his possession, police said on Saturday. A joint team of the state police and the Assam Rifles apprehended him from a place near Tuisolen village on the bank of the Barak river on Thursday, a senior officer said. "Twenty explosive sticks, 11 detonators, one metre of safety fuse and 44 soap boxes, containing suspected brown sugar weighing 457 grams, were recovered from his possession," the official said. The arrested member of the banned outfit hails from Lungthuilien village in Pherzawl district. A probe is underway to ascertain why the militant travelled from Kuki-Zo-majority Pherzawl district to Jiribam with explosives and drugs, another official said. *—PTI*

15 held after Kerala Dalit teen alleges rape by 60 in 5 years

The girl was exploited by her coaches and fellow athletes

PATHANAMTHITTA, 11 JAN

Nine more people were taken into custody for allegedly raping a Dalit girl, who is an athlete, at various locations when she was a minor, police on Saturday said.

According to the police, 15 people have been held in connection with the case so far.

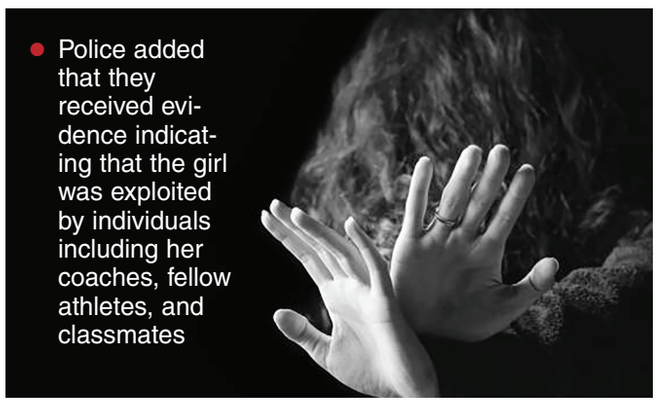
Six people were arrested on Friday after registering five FIRs in two police stations in the Pathanamthitta district, they added.

The arrests were made based on the statement of an 18-year-old girl, who alleged she had been subjected to rape multiple times since the age of 16, the police said.

The police added that they received evidence indicating that the girl was exploited by individuals including her coaches, fellow athletes, and classmates.

As per the statement of the girl, she had used her father's mobile phone to communicate with the suspects and 40 people have been identified by verifying the phone details and the information from the diary in her possession, police sources said.

Over 60 people are suspected to be involved in the case and FIRs have been filed in various police stations in Pathanamthitta, they added.



- Police added that they received evidence indicating that the girl was exploited by individuals including her coaches, fellow athletes, and classmates

The issue came to light during a counselling session **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

The arrest of those in custody will be recorded by Saturday evening, they added.

As the incidents occurred when she was a minor, sections of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, also would be invoked against the accused, a top police official said.

Meanwhile, the Pathanamthitta Child Welfare Committee (CWC) stated that individuals outside the Pathanamthitta district might also be involved in the case.

According to the CWC chairman, the girl had been a victim of sexual exploitation since the age of 13. As it was an unusual case, she was referred to a psychologist for more in-depth counseling, he told a news channel. The CWC also revealed that several phone numbers of potential suspects were found saved on her father's phone.

The issue came to light during counselling conducted by the Child Welfare Committee, after the victim's teachers at an educational institution informed the panel about noticeable changes in her behaviour. The committee subsequently notified the police, who initiated an investigation. *—PTI*

Efforts underway to rescue the labourers trapped inside an illegal rat-hole coal mine, in Dima Hasao district, Assam **PHOTO: PTI**

3 more bodies recovered from Assam mine

GUWAHATI, 11 JAN

The bodies of three workers, who were trapped inside a coal mine in Assam's Dima Hasao district, were recovered on Saturday from the quarry during rescue operations, an official said.

Four bodies have so far been recovered with the first one taken out from the mine on Wednesday, he said.

The four deceased labourers were among the nine workers trapped inside the mine in Umrangsu on Monday after a sudden gush of water flooded the quarry.

"The rescue operations resumed this morning and three bodies were recovered as the search for trapped miners entered its sixth day. The body of one labourer, hailing from Nepal, was recovered on 8 January," the official said.

One of the three labourers whose bodies were recovered from the mine during the day was identified as 27-year-old Ligen Magar, a resident of village number 1 of Kalamati in Dima Hasao, he said.

The identification of two other bodies is underway, the district official said.

Magar's body was found floating on accumulated water in the mine after the army and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) divers went to bring out the worker, the official said.

> **Illegal mining continues unchecked in Assam, fuelled by weak law enforcement and local complicity**
>
> -Gaurav Gogoi, Congress MP

"Another body was recovered from the Umrangsu mine a short while ago, marking the third recovery so far. The identification process is currently underway", Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X.

He said the rescue operations have been continuing with "unwavering resolve".

Meanwhile, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Saturday said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a SIT probe into the mining tragedy in Assam, which left four labourers in a coal quarry dead.

The families of the victims deserve justice, and "we must ensure that such incidents are prevented in the future", Gogoi added. *—PTI*

Man kills live-in partner, hides body in fridge for months in MP

DEWAS, 11 JAN

A man killed his live-in partner as she pressured him to get married and kept the body in a refrigerator for months to conceal the crime in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas district, a police official said.

The incident was reported in Vrindavan Dham Colony under BNP (Bank Note Press) police station limits in the district on Friday morning. Upon getting the information about the matter, the police rushed to the spot, inquired about the incident and took the accused into custody who has been identified as Sanjay Patidar, a resident of Ujjain district, the police added.

Superintendent of Police (SP, Dewas) Puneet Gehlot said, "We received information that a woman's body was found in a refrigerator in Vrindavan Dham Colony under BNP police station limits in the district. Acting on it, the police team immediately reached the incident site. The house belongs to a person named Dhirendra Srivastava, who currently resides in Indore and he rented this house to a person named Balveer Rajput. Rajput has been residing in that house for a long time. Two rooms of the house were locked by previous tenants. On Thursday, Balbir Rajput opened those rooms to clean them. On Friday morning, when he tried to open a refrigerator, the body of a woman was found in it. Following which, Rajput immediately informed the police."

PHOTO: PIXABAY

The police arrested the accused Sanjay Patidar. The second accused Vinod Dave is currently in jail in Rajasthan in a crime case at Kotwali police station in Tonk district. The police were trying to contact Rajasthan police. *—ANI*

COURT ALLOWS ALLU ARJUN TO TRAVEL ABROAD

HYDERABAD, 11 JAN

In a major relief to actor Allu Arjun, a court here has relaxed the conditions of his bail in the 'Pushpa 2' stampede case, exempting him from appearing before the investigating officer every Sunday.

The court also permitted him to travel abroad to specified countries, with the condition that he must undertake to appear before the SHO of the Chikkadpally police station as and when required.

He has been directed to inform the SHO of his travel schedule for each trip and provide details of his place of stay in the destination country until the charge sheet is filed. *—PTI*

A section of priests on Friday protested demanding the dismissal of the newly constituted curia of the archdiocese **PHOTO: X**

Angamaly-Ernakulam archdiocese tense after clash

KOCHI, 11 JAN

A tense atmosphere prevailed outside the Bishop House of the Angamaly-Ernakulam archdiocese, after the police on Saturday evacuated from there several priests who were on an indefinite fast demanding withdrawal of certain documents issued by an Apostolic Administrator.

Believers and priests strongly criticise the police action.

They claimed before TV channels that the protesting priests were forcibly evacuated by the police from the Bishop House in the wee hours of Saturday.

Visuals on TV channels also show that some of the protesting priests were injured in the police action.

Several believers and priests, thereafter, began arriving in numbers at the St Mary's Basilica where the protesting priests were relocated and police were also seen in large numbers.

The believers also got into a heated argument with police outside the Angamaly-Ernakulam archdiocese headquarters.

They also accused Ernakulam ACP C Jayakumar of saying that the government was against the Angamaly-Ernakulam archdiocese.

The officer denied the allegations and said the accusations were being made to create news.

On Friday, unruly scenes were witnessed at the Angamaly-Ernakulam archdiocese headquarters following a protest by a section of priests demanding the dismissal of the newly constituted curia of the archdiocese. *—PTI*

3 die after portion of iron plant collapses in Chhattisgarh

MUNGELI, 11 JAN

The bodies of three workers were recovered on Saturday from the debris of a collapsed iron silo at a smelting plant in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district after a 42-hour operation, taking the death toll to four, officials said.

On Thursday, a labourer was killed and another injured after the fly ash storage structure weighing over 350 tonnes crashed at Kusum Smelters Private Limited, located near Rambod village in Sargaon police station area of Mungeli district. Rescue teams of multiple agencies, involving over 400 personnel, launched an operation after receiving information that some workers were trapped under the rubble, officials said.

"The search and rescue operation involving machines, cranes and gas cutters began on Thursday afternoon," Mungeli Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel told PTI.

"During the 42-hour-long rescue operation, the iron structure was shifted and fly ash removed, leading to the recovery of three bodies on Saturday morning," Patel said. *—PTI*

Protest erupts after one woman dies, 4 critical after delivering babies

KOLKATA, 11 JAN

A woman died and four others were critical after the delivery of babies at a state-run hospital in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, with family members of the deceased alleging that her demise was due to the administration of expired Ringer's Lactate on the intravenous (IV) fluid, officials said on Saturday.

The death of the woman at the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) triggered a protest by workers of the Left parties and the Congress outside the health facility on Saturday.

The family members of the deceased lodged a complaint with the Kotwali Police Station, alleging that the hospital authorities were responsible for the woman's death, the officials said.

The woman died on Friday at the state-run facility after delivery of her baby on Wednesday, they said.

After the death of the woman and deterioration of the health condition of four others, the state government has formed a 13-member panel to investigate the matter, a senior official said.

The incident triggered a protest by workers of the Left parties and the Congress outside the health facility **PHOTO: X**

- Lactated Ringer's injection is used to replace water and electrolyte loss in patients with low blood volume or low blood pressure

Lactated Ringer's injection is used to replace water and electrolyte loss in patients with low blood volume or low blood pressure.

The samples of the RL have been collected and a report from the drug control is awaited, another official said. "Once we get the report, the matter will be clear," he said. The baby delivered by the deceased woman is still admitted to the MMCH, the official said. *—PTI*

10,09,114 INDIAN TOURISTS

Indian tourists to Malaysia up by 71.7% in 2024

CHENNAI, 11 JAN

A record 71.7 per cent increase in travellers from India to Malaysia was witnessed in 2024, attributed to the rise in flight connectivity between the two nations, Consul General of Malaysia in Chennai, Saravana Kumar Kumaravasagam, said here.

With Malaysia extending the 30-day visa exemption for Indian nationals until December 2026, he described it as a "significant milestone" in enhancing connectivity between India and Malaysia.

"This is a golden opportunity for the people of Tamil Nadu and across India to explore Malaysia's rich cultural heritage, pristine beaches, and vibrant cities without the hassle of applying for a visa," Kumar said in a press release on Saturday.

In 2025, Malaysia has rolled out unique offerings, including Community-Based Tourism **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

As Malaysia remains a key destination for Indian travellers, this extension of the 30-day visa exemption ensures seamless travel, he added.

Tourism Malaysia's Chennai Director, Hishamuddin Mustafa, noted that the visa exemption not only simplifies travel but also reaffirms Malaysia's commitment to being a preferred destination for Indian tourists.

In 2025, Malaysia has rolled out unique offerings, including Community-Based Tourism, positioning Malaysia as a premier wedding destination, promoting Malaysia as an education hub, and targeting high-potential customers under the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment.

Top officials from the Southeast Asian country also unveiled the logo of 'Visit Malaysia Year 2026,' featuring the Malayan Sun Bears—Wira and Manja—as mascots to symbolise the country's multicultural harmony and natural beauty.

Regarding tourist arrivals in Malaysia, the year 2024 marked a significant milestone, with 10,09,114 visitors from India—up by 71.7 per cent compared to 2023. *—PTI*

House 'encroaching' Sambhal stepwell partly demolished

SAMBHAL, 11 JAN

A house, which allegedly encroached a portion of a nearly 150-year-old stepwell found recently in Chandausi area of Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district, was partly demolished by its owner last night following a notice by municipal authorities, an official said on Saturday.

Executive Officer of Chandausi Nagar Palika Parishad, Krishna Kumar Sonkar, said since the excavation has been going on, it came to light that the house was encroaching the stepwell on its side. A notice was given to a woman named Gulnaz (wife of Yusuf Saifi), resident of Laxman Ganj, and they are demolishing it themselves.

"They were given a notice and they are demolishing it on their own. If we had demolished it with JCB, there would have been more damage. Yesterday, the district magistrate explained to them that only a part has to be removed, the rest will be left," he said.

PHOTO: PTI

Gulnaz said she is sad her house is going away. "I was given a notice to vacate the house within 24 hours. I had talked to the DM. He asked us to register a case."

There was excessive weight and keeping in view the possibility of rain in future, a shed will be constructed over it, he said. *—PTI*

FLY HIGH IN INT'L KITE FESTIVAL

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Saturday inaugurated the four-day International Kite Festival, which has drawn 143 participants from 47 countries. The 'International Kite Festival-2025' is being organised at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad from January 11 to January 14. Apart from Ahmedabad, the festival has also been organised at the Statue of Unity (Ekta Nagar), Rajkot and Vadodara on 12 January and Surat, Shivrajpur and Dhordo on 13 January
PHOTO: PTI

Small players aim to spoil gameplan of big 3 in Delhi

Fringe political players in Delhi, such as BSP and AIMIM, are strategising to eat away the votes of the three main contenders — the AAP, BJP and Congress — in the upcoming Delhi assembly polls to spoil their gameplan.

BSP is planing to contest all 70 seats while AIMIM is fielding candidates on about a dozen of Muslim-dominated seats. The two parties have planned rallies by their chiefs Mayawati (BSP) and Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM).

The smaller political players in the national capital are gearing up to mount a strong challenge in the upcoming polls -- promising to address issues "neglected" in the Muslim-majority localities, combating corruption and pledging good governance, among others.

One of them is the Bharatiya Liberal Party (BLP), founded recently by US-based doctor Munish Kumar Raizada and others associated with the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption movement.

Raizada said he and Arvind Kejriwal were part of the anti-corruption movement, but has now decided to give a "tough fight" to AAP.

Raizada, who returned to India 15 months ago, will contest against the AAP chief from the New Delhi constituency. Former BJP MP Parvesh Verma is also contesting from the seat, while the Congress has fielded Sandeep Dikshit.

The Bahujan Samaj Party, which is focusing on strengthening its base among Dalit and marginalised communities, has decided to contest all the 70 seats and feels it can make life difficult for its rivals.

In the coming day, the party plans to hold rallies featuring its supremo Mayawati.

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), led by Hyderabad Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi, will contest 10-12 seats. The party has so far announced two candidates -- Tahir Hussain from Mustafabad and Shafa ur Rehman from Okhla -- both of whom are accused in the 2020 Delhi riot cases.

BSP is planing to contest all 70 seats while AIMIM is fielding candidates on about a dozen of Muslim-dominated seats ***PHOTOS: PTI***

Delhi will vote in single phase on 5 February and the results will be declared on 8 February.

The ruling AAP and BJP are locked in an intense electoral battle, while the Congress, which governed the city for 15 years under Sheila Dikshit's leadership, is making a strong effort to stage a comeback.

The Aam Aadmi Party has been in office for the past 10 years, while the BJP, which has been out of power since 1998, is making a concerted effort to dethrone the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP.

Talking to PTI, AIMIM Delhi President Shoaib Jamai said the party has already fielded two strong candidates who were prominent faces of the protests against the

Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Jamai emphasised that the party's primary focus is a direct fight with the BJP on Muslim-majority constituencies.

"On all the seats we are contesting, we are directly challenging the BJP. The Aam Aadmi Party and Congress should recognise that their presence is not needed on these seats. We will confront the BJP head-on," he said.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi is likely to hold a few rallies in the constituencies where the party has fielded candidates.

Jamai said if the AIMIM manages to secure some seats and needs to form an alliance, the party may align with others to stop the BJP.

The party has also pledged to address issue in Muslim-majority areas such as lack of infrastructure, housing and traffic woes, which have been "neglected".

He assured voters that under Owaisi's leadership, development would be carried out the way it has been in Hyderabad.

Other smaller players in Delhi like the BSP and BLP will compete on all 70 seats.

The Bharat Liberal Party's agenda is centered around three pillars of good governance, anti-corruption and social justice.

BLP chief Raizada told PTI, "We are here for long-term development in Delhi. If the BLP comes to power in Delhi, the first step we will take is to create an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

"Through this, we will bring accountability and responsibility in the system. We will strengthen the framework of responsibility, accountability, and culpability to ensure effective governance."

Raizada said the AAP government has failed on all fronts, including civic issues and community welfare. Delhi needs a good governance model as people have suffered the misgovernance of the past 10 years, he said.

"We are contesting all 70 seats and have already announced candidates for eight seats till now. I am contesting from the New Delhi constituency against Arvind Kejriwal, whom I consider a thoroughly corrupt and unprincipled politician who betrayed the anti-corruption movement.

"That is why we have given tickets to honest, principled, and financially independent candidates who can fund their campaigns and bring integrity to the system," he added.

The Bahujan Samaj Party is also in the fray, aiming to strengthen its base among Dalit and marginalised communities.

While the party has kept its strategies relatively under wraps, it plans to contest all 70 seats. Nitin Singh, the Central Coordinator of the BSP, said the party's focus remains on providing better opportunities.

"We had a significant vote share between 2008 to 2012. Our people were misled by Kejriwal's false promise. In the February 5 polls, we will fight to reclaim our vote share and give a tough fight," Singh said.

He said the BSP is known for it work towards addressing basic rights and needs, which the people of Delhi have long been deprived of.

He said the people of Delhi are living in deplorable condition and the party's priority would be to focus on essential needs such as healthcare, education, and employment.

Singh further emphasised his party would address issues like the poor condition of roads and other civic problems. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Santa Ana winds fuelled the deadly fires in LA

Powerful Santa Ana winds, with gusts reaching hurricane strength, swept down the mountains outside Los Angeles and spread wildfires into several neighbourhoods starting 7 January, 2025, creating a terrifying scene.

Thousands of homes and other structures, including several schools, had burned by 10 Januray, and at least 10 people had died. Officials urged more than 1,80,000 residents to evacuate at the height of the fires. With the winds so strong, there was little firefighters could do to control the flames.

Jon Keeley, a research ecologist in California with the US Geological Survey and adjunct professor at UCLA, explains what causes extreme winds like this in Southern California, and why they create such a dangerous fire risk.

What causes the Santa Ana winds?

The Santa Ana winds are dry, powerful winds that blow down the mountains toward the Southern California coast. The region sees about 10 Santa Ana wind events a year on average, typically occurring from fall into January.

When conditions are dry, as they are right now, these winds can become a severe fire hazard.

The Santa Ana winds occur when there is high pressure to the east, in the Great Basin, and a low-pressure system off the coast. Air masses move from high pressure to low pressure, and the more extreme the difference in the pressure, the faster the winds blow.

Topography also plays a role.

As the winds rush downslope from the top of the San Gabriel Mountains, they become drier and hotter. That's a function of the physics of air masses. By the time the winds get to the point where the Eaton Fire broke out in Altadena on 7 Jan, it's not uncommon for them to have less than 5 per cent relative humidity, meaning essentially no moisture at all.

Canyons also channel the winds. I used to live in the Altadena area, and we would get days during Santa Ana wind events when the wind wasn't present at all where we lived, but, a few blocks away, the wind was extremely strong.

These strong, dry winds are often around 30 to 40 mph. But they can be stronger. The wind gusts in early January 2025 were reported to have exceeded 80 mph.

Why was the fire risk so high this time?

Typically, Southern California has enough rain by now that the vegetation is moist and doesn't readily burn. A study a few years ago showed that autumn moisture reduces the risk of Santa Ana wind-driven fires.

This year, however, Southern California has very dry conditions, with very little moisture over the past several months. With these extreme winds, we have the perfect storm for severe fires.

It's very hard to extinguish a fire under these conditions. The firefighters in the area will tell you, if there's a Santa Ana wind-driven fire, they will evacuate people ahead of the fire front and control the edges – but when the wind is blowing like this, there's very little chance of stopping it until the wind subsides.

Other states have seen similar fires driven by strong downslope winds. During the Chimney Tops 2 Fire in Tennessee in November 2016, strong downslope winds spread the flames into homes in Gatlinburg, killing 14 people and burning more than 2,500 homes. Boulder County, Colorado, lost about 1,000 homes when powerful winds coming down the mountains there spread the Marshall Fire in December 2021.

Have the Santa Ana winds changed over time?

Santa Ana wind events aren't new, but we're seeing them more often this time of year.

My colleagues and I recently published a paper comparing 71 years of Santa Ana wind events, starting in 1948. We found about the same amount of overall Santa Ana wind activity, but the timing is shifting from fewer events in September and more in December and January. Due to well-documented trends in climate change, it is tempting to ascribe this to global warming, but as yet there is no substantial evidence of this.

California is seeing more destructive fires than we saw in the past. That's driven not just by changes in the climate and the winds, but also by population growth.

More people now live in and at the edges of wildland areas, and the power grid has expanded with them.

That creates more opportunities for fires to start. In extreme weather, power lines face a higher risk of falling or being hit by tree branches and sparking a fire. The area burnt because of fires related to power lines has greatly expanded; today it is the major ignition source for destructive fires in Southern California.

The Eaton Fire, which has burned many homes, is at the upper perimeter of the San Gabriel Basin, at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. Fifty years ago, fewer people lived there. Back then, some parts of the basin were surrounded by citrus orchards, and fires in the mountains would burn out in the orchards before reaching homes. Today, there is no buffer between homes and the wildland. The point of ignition for the Eaton Fire appears to have been near or within one of those neighborhoods. *—PTI*

A helicopter drops water on the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Trump's words on Greenland and borders ring alarms in Europe

President-elect Donald Trump has tossed expansionist rhetoric at US allies and potential adversaries with arguments that the frontiers of American power need to be extended into Canada and the Danish territory of Greenland, and southward to include the Panama Canal.

Trump's suggestions that international borders can be redrawn — by force if necessary — are particularly inflammatory in Europe. His words run contrary to the argument European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy are trying to impress on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But many European leaders — who've learned to expect the unexpected from Trump and have seen that actions don't always follow his words — have been guarded in their response, with some taking a nothing-to-see-here view rather than vigorously defend European Union member Denmark.

Analysts, though, say that even words can damage US-European relations ahead of Trump's second presidency.

A diplomatic response in Europe

Several officials in Europe — where governments depend on US trade, energy, investment, technology, and defense cooperation for security — emphasised their belief that Trump has no intention of marching troops into Greenland.

"I think we can exclude that the United States in the coming years will try to use force to annex territory that interests it," Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz pushed back — but carefully, saying "borders must not be moved by force" and not mentioning Trump by name.

This week, as Ukrainian President Zelenskyy pressed Trump's incoming administration to continue supporting Ukraine, he said: "No matter what's going on in the world, everyone wants to feel sure that their country will not just be erased off the map."

Since Putin marched troops across Ukrainian borders in 2022, Zelenskyy and allies have been fighting — at great cost — to defend the principle that has underpinned the international order since World War II: that powerful nations can't simply gobble up others.

The British and French foreign ministers have said they can't foresee a US invasion of Greenland. Still, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot portrayed Trump's remarks as a wake-up call.

"Do we think we're entering into a period that sees the return of the law of the strongest?" the French minister said. "Yes."

Donald Trump's suggestions that international borders can be redrawn — by force if necessary — are particularly inflammatory in Europe ***PHOTO: PTI***

On Friday, the prime minister of Greenland — a semiautonomous Arctic territory that isn't part of the EU but whose 56,000 residents are EU citizens, as part of Denmark — said its people don't want to be Americans but that he's open to greater cooperation with the US.

"Cooperation is about dialogue," leader Múte B. Egede said.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called the US "our closest ally" and said: "We have to stand together."

Analysts find Trump's words troubling

European security analysts agreed there's no real likelihood of Trump using the military against NATO ally Denmark, but nevertheless expressed profound disquiet.

Analysts warned of turbulence ahead for trans-Atlantic ties, international norms and the NATO military alliance — not least because of the growing row with member Canada over Trump's repeated suggestions that it become a US state.

"There is a possibility, of course, that this is just ... a new sheriff in town," said Flemming Splidsboel Hansen, who specialises in foreign policy, Russia and Greenland at the Danish Institute for International Studies. "I take some comfort from the fact that he is now insisting that Canada should be included in the US, which suggests that it is just sort of political bravado.

"But damage has already been done. And I really cannot remember a previous incident like this where an important ally — in this case the most important ally — would threaten Denmark or another NATO member state."

Hansen said he fears NATO may be falling apart even before Trump's inauguration.

"I worry about our understanding of a collective West," he said. "What does this even mean now? What may this mean just, say, one year from now, two years from now, or at least by the end of this second Trump presidency? What will be left?"

Security concerns as possible motivation

Some diplomats and analysts see a common thread in Trump's eyeing of Canada, the Panama Canal and Greenland: securing resources and waterways to strengthen the US against potential adversaries.

Paris-based analyst Alix Frangeul-Alves said Trump's language is "all part of his Make America Great Again' mode."

In Greenland's soils, she noted, are rare earths critical for advanced and green technologies. China dominates global supplies of the valuable minerals, which the US, Europe and other nations view as a security risk.

"Any policy made in Washington is made through the lens of the competition with China," said Frangeul-Alves, who focuses on US politics for the German Marshall Fund.

Some observers said Trump's suggested methods are fraught with peril.

Security analyst Alexander Khara said Trump's claim that "we need Greenland for national security purposes" reminded him of Putin's comments on Crimea when Russia seized the strategic Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

Suggesting that borders might be flexible is "a completely dangerous precedent," said Khara, director of the Centre for Defence Strategies in Kyiv.

"We're in a time of transition from the old system based on norms and principles," he said, and "heading to more conflicts, more chaos and more uncertainty." *—PTI*

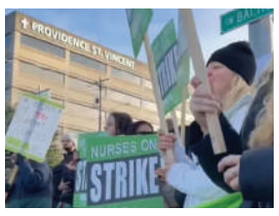


PHOTO: X

Oregon's healthcare strike hits Providence hospitals

PORTLAND, 11 JAN

Some 5,000 hospital health care workers walked off the job Friday as they picketed all eight Providence hospitals in Oregon, in what the state health workers union described as the largest health care strike in Oregon history — and the first to involve doctors. Most of those participating in the open-ended strike are nurses. But in a rare move, dozens of doctors at a Portland hospital and at six women's health clinics are also partaking, making it the state's first physicians strike, according to the Oregon Nurses Association union. The strike came after more than a year of negotiations failed to produce an agreement over staffing levels, pay and benefits. *—PTI*

1 arrested in hammer attack at Tokyo university

TOKYO, 11 JAN

Japanese police arrested a student suspected of a hammer attack at a Tokyo university, which local media said left several injured. The 22-year-old South Korean sociology student was apprehended on the spot for allegedly attacking a male student during class at Hosei University's Tama campus in Tokyo's western suburbs on Friday, causing him minor injuries, according to the Tokyo metropolitan police. Japanese media said seven more students suffered minor injuries as the suspect allegedly hit them in succession. It was not clear whether her actions were premeditated. Kyodo News agency reported that the suspect told investigators she felt "frustrated" after being ignored and bullied by her classmates and used a hammer she found on campus. *—PTI*

Four killed, eight missing in Pak coal mine blast

KARACHI, 11 JAN

A methane gas explosion has led to the collapse of a coal mine in Pakistan's volatile Balochistan province, claiming the lives of at least four miners. The incident occurred on 9 January in the Sanjdi area, approximately 40kms from Quetta, trapping 12 workers within the debris. Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind explained that the explosion was caused by the accumulation of methane gas, triggering the mine's collapse. Although rescue efforts have been ongoing for over 24 hours, progress has been hampered due to toxic gas and debris. Abdullah Shawani, head of the province's mining department, said that the chances of finding the eight missing miners alive are slim. *—PTI*

Indian pleads guilty to possession of child sexual material

WASHINGTON DC, 11 JAN

A 30-year-old Indian national who was previously employed with a cruise line, has pleaded guilty to possession of child sexual abuse material, a US attorney said on Friday. Abdul Rouvoof Shaik faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment, a fine of up to USD 250,000, and a period of supervised release of up to life. According to court documents, Shaik was previously employed by Carnival Cruise Lines and was arrested in July 2024 after special agents with the US Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, found he was in possession of child pornography at the Erato Street Cruise Terminal in New Orleans. Sentencing is scheduled for April 16, before United States District Judge Ivan L.R. Lemelle in New Orleans. *—PTI*

10 days before leaving office, Biden sanctions Russia

US also sanctions 2 Indian firms for violating Russia restrictions

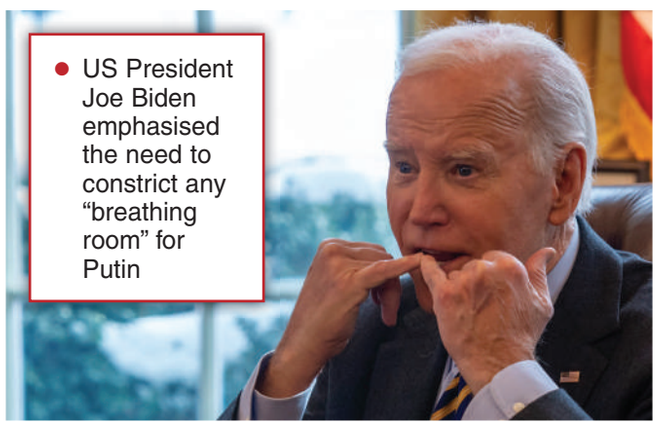
WASHINGTON, 11 JAN

In a decisive move ten days before the transition of power to Donald Trump, the United States has enacted sweeping sanctions against Russia, specifically targeting its energy sector to bolster Ukraine's fight for independence. Outgoing President Joe Biden announced the sanctions on Friday, which affect numerous companies and entities facilitating Russia's energy exports, particularly in natural gas—two of which are based in India.

"The sanctions will significantly impact the Russian economy and hinder President Putin's capacity to wage war," Biden stated at a White House news conference. He acknowledged that while American gas prices might rise by USD 0.03 to USD 0.04 per gallon, the broader implications of the sanctions would substantially affect Russia's military actions. He emphasised the need to constrict any "breathing room" for Putin, asserting that the Russian leader is grappling with severe economic and political troubles at home. "I have done everything within my authority to provide Ukraine with the necessary advantages to sustain its independence," he added, revealing that he had discussed the situation extensively with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Biden said he had a long talk with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"I think that as long as we continue to keep Western Europe united as relates to Ukraine, then there is a real chance that the Ukrainians can prevail because the cost to Russia is incredibly high. Over 600,000 and some dead or wounded, the Koreans they brought in are having high mortality rates as well," he said. Biden administration slapped sanctions on two Indian companies for allegedly violating the American sanctions on Russia by involving in the transportation of LNG from the warring country. The two Indian companies Skyhart Management Services and Avision Management Services have been slapped with sanctions, said the long list of individuals and companies that have been imposed with fresh sanctions for violating the Russian sanctions. *—PTI*



- US President Joe Biden emphasised the need to constrict any "breathing room" for Putin

President Joe Biden whistles during a press meet in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington *PHOTO: PTI*

Meta axes diversity programme for Trump 2.0

MENLO PARK , 11 JAN

- Other companies that have curbed DEI programmes recently include McDonald's and automaker Ford as well as Walmart and farm equipment maker John Deere

Joining companies such as John Deere and Walmart, Facebook and Instagram's parent company Meta Platforms Inc is getting rid of its diversity, equity and inclusion programme that includes hiring, training and picking vendors, a company spokesperson confirmed on Friday.

The move, which was first reported by Axios, comes on the heels of the social media giant's decision to end its third-party fact-checking programme and scale back policies on hate speech and abuse.

Citing an internal memo sent to employees, Axios said the Menlo Park, California-based tech giant said the US Supreme Court "has recently made decisions signalling a shift in how courts will approach DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion programmes)... The term DEI' has also become charged, in part because it is understood by some as a practice that suggests preferential treatment of some groups over others."

The company will also end its "diverse slate approach" to hiring, which meant that a diverse pool of candidates was considered for every open position.

Other companies that have curbed DEI programmes recently include McDonald's and automaker Ford as well as Walmart and farm equipment maker John Deere.

Meanwhile, Mark Zuckerberg claimed Biden officials phoned executives at Meta to "scream" and "curse" at them, ordering them to remove negative posts on Facebook about the coronavirus vaccine. *—Agencies*

Myanmar military air attack in Rakhine State kills dozens

NAYPYIDAW, 11 JAN

Air attacks by Myanmar's military in Rakhine state this week killed dozens of people, the United Nations said, as the country continues to be mired in violence four years after a coup.

The UN said that military government forces hit Kyauk Ni Maw, a village in Ramree island township, killing more than 40 people and destroying about 500 homes.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military overthrew the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, igniting mass protests that evolved into a widespread armed rebellion on multiple fronts that left thousands of dead.

Women and children were among those who were killed in Rakhine, according to the statement, which was attributed to the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar.

The UN report corroborates earlier testimonies by a rescue worker and ethnic armed group the Arakan Army (AA) about the deadly violence in Rakhine. The AA released the names of at least 26 Muslim villagers it said were among those killed, and 12 people injured in the attack.

The government has repeatedly rejected accusations that its forces are committing atrocities against civilians, saying it is trying to combat "terrorists".

The military has been struggling to fight opposition to its rule on multiple fronts around the country, and several areas have now fallen under the control of different rebel groups. *—Agencies*

Women and children were among those who were killed in Rakhine *PHOTO: X*

AGAINST PRO-RUSSIAN POLICIES

Thousands of people in Slovakia took to the streets against Prime Minister Robert Fico over his recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The protests also followed Fico's threat last week to cut financial aid for over 1,30,000 Ukrainian refugees living in Slovakia *PHOTO: X*

Panama Canal chief refutes Trump's claims of Chinese interference

PANAMA CITY, 11 JAN

The administrator of the Panama Canal said that the vital waterway will remain in Panamanian hands and open to commerce from all countries, rejecting claims by President-elect Donald Trump that the United States should take it over.

Ricaurte Vásquez denied Trump's claims that China was controlling the canal's operations, and said making exceptions to current rules concerning its operation would lead to "chaos."

He said Chinese companies operating in the ports on either end of the canal were part of a Hong Kong consortium that won a bidding process in 1997. He added that U.S. and Taiwanese companies are operating other ports along the canal as well.

Trump has gone so far as to suggest the US should take back control of the canal and he would not rule out using military might to do so.

"It might be that you'll have to do something," Trump said Tuesday. "The Panama Canal is vital to our country." Trump has characterised the fees for transiting the canal that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as "ridiculous." Vásquez said there was "no foundation for that sort of hope. That is the only thing I can say."

Vasquez stressed that the Panama Canal was open to the commerce of all countries. *—PTI*

Another synagogue vandalised in Sydney

SYDNEY, 11 JAN

A synagogue in Sydney has been daubed in anti-Semitic graffiti, police said, a day after the anti-Semitic vandalism of a separate synagogue in the New South Wales state capital.

According to police officials, vandals spray painted red swastikas outside the entrance to an inner-city synagogue early on Saturday, while a house in Sydney's affluent east was daubed with anti-Jewish slurs. The incident comes a day after an attack on the Southern Sydney Synagogue in the suburb of Allawah in the early hours of Friday morning. A special police task force was set up to investigate the incident later on Friday.

Australia has seen a series of anti-Semitic incidents in the last year, including graffiti on buildings and cars in Sydney, as well as an arson attack on a synagogue in Melbourne that police have ruled as "terrorism".

The December attack on the Melbourne synagogue prompted the government to create a federal task force targeting anti-Semitism. Some Jewish organisations have said that the government has not taken sufficient action in response. *—Agencies*

Jeju crash: Final 4 minutes missing from black boxes

SEOUL, 11 JAN

Investigators in South Korea have revealed that the black boxes recovered from the ill-fated Jeju Air passenger plane lack essential data from the last four minutes prior to its crash. According to the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), both the flight data recorder (FDR) and cockpit voice recorder (CVR) ceased recording approximately four minutes before the aircraft collided with a localizer structure at Muan International Airport.

The tragedy unfolded at 9.03am on 29 December, when the Boeing 737-800 struck a concrete mound while landing, failing to deploy its landing gear. The recording devices stopped at 8.59am, complicating the investigation into the crash.

Authorities have stated that while FDR and CVR data are vital for investigations, other sources will also be examined, including air traffic control records and video footage of the incident.

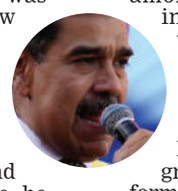
The black box components were sent to the NTSB for further analysis, with South Korean investigators expected to return shortly to continue their inquiry.

The crash resulted in the deaths of 179 individuals, with only two survivors among the 181 passengers and crew.

The incident prompted global expressions of condolence, including messages from US President Joe Biden. *—ANI*

VENEZUELA'S MADURO SWORN IN AS PREZ

CARACAS, 11 JAN



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was sworn for a new term, extending his increasingly repressive rule in the face of renewed protests and rebukes from the United States and others who believe he stole last year's vote.

Crowds of people, many sporting pro-Maduro T-shirts, gathered in adjacent streets and a nearby plaza. The backslapping among government insiders in downtown Caracas contrasted sharply with the hundreds who took to the streets to protest Maduro's power grab. Aides to the former lawmaker María Corina Machado said she was briefly detained by security forces. *—PTI*

US CLIMATE CHAOS

California fire: Smoke inhalation causes health emergency

LOS ANGELES, 11 JAN

Los Angeles County's public health authority has declared a local health emergency, as smoke and ash from the wildfires creates poor air quality.

Fires and strong winds have "severely degraded air quality... posing immediate and long-term risks to public health", a statement read.

LA County Public Health urges those not told to evacuate to stay indoors, keep windows and doors closed and to use air conditioners to filter the air. If residents must go outside, a mask is advised.

Since the flames erupted in and around Los Angeles, scores of residents have returned to their still smoldering neighbourhoods even as the threat of new fires persisted and the nation's second-largest city remained unsettled. 11 people have been killed, with five from the Palisades Fire and six from the Eaton Fire. *—PTI*

The devastation of the Palisades Fire is seen in the early morning in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles *PHOTO: PTI*

Severe winter storm disrupts normal life in southern US

ATLANTA, 11 JAN

A potent winter storm has swept through the Southern United States, dumping heavy snow and ice across Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and beyond, leading to hazardous travel conditions and widespread school closures. As the storm moved eastward on Friday, Arkansas and North Carolina activated their National Guards to assist stranded motorists, with several governors declaring states of emergency.

In the Atlanta area, students enjoyed their first significant snowfall in years, with 1 million public school students either benefiting from a snow day or attending online classes. In Atlanta, a ground stop was enacted at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport after heavy snow began falling early Friday, resulting in significant delays and cancellations. A Delta Airlines jet had to abort its takeoff, leading to injuries among passengers. *—PTI*

In the Atlanta, students enjoyed their first snowfall in years, with 1 million students either benefiting or attending online classes *PHOTO: X*

Indian economy to be 'a little weaker' in 2025: IMF

IMF flagged uncertainty around US trade policy under Trump

WASHINGTON, 11 JAN

The Indian economy is expected to be "a little weaker" in 2025 despite steady global growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said.

Georgieva also said she expects quite a lot of uncertainty in the world this year mainly around the trade policy of the US.

In her annual media roundtable with a group of reporters on Friday, she said global growth is expected to be steady in 2025, but with regional divergence.

Georgieva said she expects the Indian economy to be a little weaker in 2025. However, she did not explain it any further. The World Economy Outlook update week will have more details about it.

"The US is doing quite a bit better than we expected before, the EU is somewhat stalling, (and) India a little weaker," she said.

Kristalina Georgieva. *PHOTO: X*

- In China, the world's second-largest economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was seeing deflationary pressure and ongoing challenges with domestic demand

Brazil was facing somewhat higher inflation, she said.

In China, the world's second-largest economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was seeing deflationary pressure and ongoing challenges with domestic demand, she said.

"Low-income countries, despite all the efforts they are making, are in a position when any new shock can affect them quite negatively," Georgieva said.

"What we expect in 2025 is to have quite a lot of uncertainty, especially in terms of economic policies. Not surprisingly, given the size and role of the US economy, there is keen interest globally in the policy directions of the incoming administration, in particular on tariffs, taxes, deregulation and government efficiency," Georgieva said.

On inflation, the IMF expects global disinflation to continue, Georgieva said. *—PTI*

JustDial Q3 profitup 43% to ₹131 crore

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

JustDial Ltd, a local search engine, has reported 42.7 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at ₹131.31 crore for December quarter FY25. It had a net profit of ₹92.01 crore in the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from JustDial, now controlled by Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd. Revenue from operation was up 8.4 per cent at ₹287.33 crore in the December quarter. The company "achieved its highest-ever quarterly revenue in Q3 FY25, further solidifying its position as a leader in the digital services," said JustDial in its earning statement. Total expenses were at ₹215.57 crore, down 1.55 per cent from the year-ago period. Total income during the quarter under review stood at ₹364.74 crore, up 7.3 per cent. *—PTI*

Sunteck Realty sales bookings up 40% in Dec

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Sunteck Realty has reported 40 per cent growth in its sale bookings to Rs 635 crore during the latest December quarter, driven by bullish housing demand. In a regulatory filing late Friday, Sunteck Realty said the company's sale bookings or pre-sales in the year-ago period was Rs 455 crore. During April-December period of 2024-25, the company's pre-sales registered a growth of 34 per cent to Rs 1,661 crore from Rs 1,237 crore in the year-ago period. Mumbai-based Sunteck Realty is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X

NLC India & APDCL to develop solar projects in Assam

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

State-owned NLC India Ltd on Saturday said its renewables arm has entered into a joint venture pact with Assam Power Distribution Company Ltd (APDCL) for developing 1000 MW solar power projects in Assam. The pact has been signed between NLC India Renewables Ltd (NIRL) and APDCL, a company statement said. While NIRL will have 51 per cent stake in the JV, APDCL will have 49 per cent. As per the pact, NIRL will bring its expertise in renewable energy project development and APDCL will facilitate land acquisition, regulatory approvals, and power evacuation infrastructure. Power purchase pacts will be signed with Assam discoms for the sale of 100 per cent of the generated for 25 years. *—PTI*

EMA Partners India SME IPO to open on 17 Jan

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Mumbai-based EMA Partners India on Saturday said it is looking to raise Rs 76 crore on the NSE's Emerge platform through an initial public offering, which will open for public subscription on 17 January. The issue with a price band of Rs 117-124 apiece will conclude on 21 January. The bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on January 16, the company said in a statement. At the upper end of the price band, the company will raise about Rs 76.01 crore. The shares of the company are proposed to be listed on the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) platform of NSE Emerge. Investors can bid for a minimum of 1,000 shares and in multiples thereof, it added. The initial public offering (IPO) is a fresh issue of up to 53.34 lakh equity shares, aggregating up to Rs 66.14 crore and an offer for sale component of up to 7.96 lakh shares by promoters -- Krishnan Sudarshan, according to the red herring prospectus (RHP). *—PTI*

CASE AGAINST EVS

CCPA intensifies probe against Ola

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

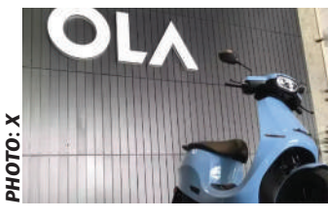


PHOTO: X

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has deepened its investigation into Ola Electric Mobility Limited and asked for additional documents as part of its ongoing investigation into alleged consumer rights violations.

This latest request, made via email on 10 January, follows an earlier notice issued to the company on 4 December, 2024.

"In continuation of the earlier letter received from the Central Consumer Protection Authority dated 4 December, 2024, by Ola Electric Mobility Limited we would like to inform you that the company has received further requests for information via email dated 10 January, 2025," Ola Electric said in an exchange filing on Friday.

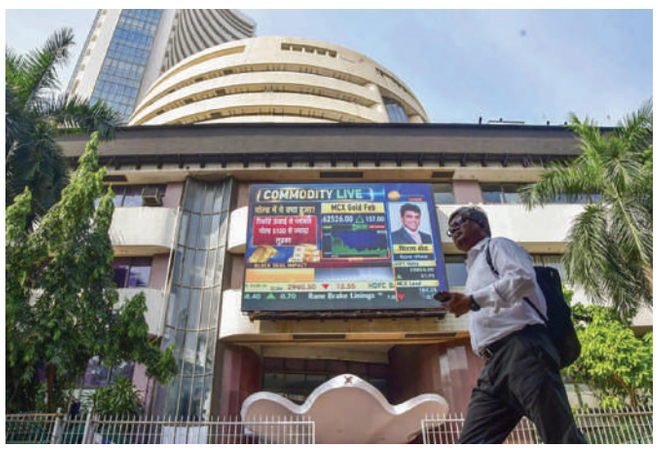
This comes days after the Karnataka High Court granted the Bhavish Aggarwal-led firm a six-week extension to submit its response to the CCPA.

The CCPA first issued the show-cause notice to Ola Electric on 8 October, 2024, over alleged consumer rights violations, misleading advertisements, and unfair trade practices.

The matter has also reached the Karnataka High Court, where legal proceedings are currently underway. The court has granted Ola Electric six weeks to respond to the CCPA's notice. *—ANI*

Laxmi Dental raises ₹314 cr from investors ahead of IPO

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN



The issue with a price band of Rs 407-428 per scrip will open for public subscription on 13 January *PHOTO: X*

OrbiMed-backed Laxmi Dental has collected a little over Rs 314 crore from anchor investors, ahead of its initial share-sale opening for public subscription.

The anchor round witnessed participation from domestic mutual funds, insurance companies and foreign entities, according to a circular uploaded on the BSE website on Friday.

Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund (MF), ICICI Prudential MF, HDFC MF, Kotak MF, Mirae Asset MF, Tata MF, Birla Sunlife Insurance, Max Life Insurance, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Nomura, Goldman Sachs, Al Mehwar Commercial Investments and Natixis Investment Managers, among others, have been allotted shares in the anchor round.

Going by the circular, Mumbai-based Laxmi Dental has allotted 73.39 lakh shares to 31 entities at Rs 428 per equity share, aggregating the transaction size to Rs 314.12 crore. The issue with a price band of Rs 407-428 per scrip will open for public subscription on 13 January and conclude on 15 January.

The IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares for up to Rs 138 crore and an OFS of up to 1.31 crore equity shares worth Rs 560 crore by promoters -- Rajesh Vrajlal Khakhar and Sameer Kamlesh Merchant, and other shareholders, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP).

Laxmi Dental, an end-to-end integrated dental products company, has a comprehensive portfolio that includes custom-made crowns and bridges, branded dental products. *—PTI*

NCLAT TO DECIDE ON INSOLVENCY

Supertech lender rejects settlement proposal

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

PHOTO: X

Punjab & Sind Bank, the lead lender of Supertech Township Projects, has rejected the settlement proposal and NCLAT will now take a final decision on the insolvency of the debt-ridden realty firm.

Counsel representing Ram Kishore Arora, the suspended director of the realty firm informed NCLAT on Thursday about the rejection of the settlement proposal.

"Counsel for the appellant (Arora) submits that they have received the communication from Punjab & Sind Bank that the proposal submitted by the appellant is not acceptable," noted an NCLAT order recording the submissions.

A three-member bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) said it will have to take a "final decision" in the matter as the appeal has been pending for the last several months.

Supertech Township Projects is developing a Group Housing Project - Golf Country at Yamuna Expressway, Greater Noida, UP.

During the proceedings of NCLAT, the registered homebuyers association submitted that the homebuyers also did not agree with the settlement proposal by Arora.

Another set of homebuyers submitted that they do not support the insolvency of Supertech Township Projects.

On 30 July, NCLAT stayed the insolvency proceedings against Supertech Township Projects after the realty firm proposed to settle its disputes with Punjab Bank. *—PTI*

Under-construction property supply soars by 46.8%

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Magicbricks Research has revealed a significant 46.8 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in the supply of under-construction residential properties across major cities in India.

The report highlights notable growth in cities such as Bengaluru, Gurugram, and Kolkata, showcasing the resilience and dynamism of India's residential real estate market.

Bengaluru stands out as the leader in this growth, with an impressive 114 per cent YoY increase in the supply of under-construction properties.

Gurugram follows closely, experiencing a 98 per cent rise. Over the last quarter alone, under-construction property supply grew by 10.97 per cent, with Gurugram showing the most significant increase at 30.97 per cent, followed by Kolkata (27.80 per cent) and Bengaluru (27.39 per cent). *—ANI*

'IT, Pharma PAT to grow by 5.8% in FY25'

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

PHOTO: FREEPIK

JM Financial coverage universe is poised to report a 5.8 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in profit after tax (PAT) for the third quarter of FY25, driven by robust performances in IT services and pharmaceuticals.

The report stated, "This quarter will be impacted by furloughs; its impact will be similar to that last year. This is not encouraging given furloughs were deeper and longer last time around. Discretionary spend environment continues to be muted. It is restricted to a few pockets still. 3Q performance is, however, not a reflection of underlying demand. Client budgets, deal wins and uptick in short duration deals would be better gauges."

The Indian equity market has experienced a challenging period during 2QFY25 and 3QFY25, marked by slower urban consumption, weaker-than-expected capital expenditure (capex), and rising stress in unsecured lending books.

The Nifty50 index has declined 10 per cent from its peak in September 2024, driven by several factors, including slowing demand, earnings cuts, and an unfavorable macroeconomic environment.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have offloaded Indian equities worth USD 11.8 billion in 3QFY25, significantly impacting sectors such as oil & gas, auto, and BFSI.

Meanwhile, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) partially offset this outflow by infusing USD 22.1 billion into the market. The global shift in investor sentiment towards the US, fueled by Donald Trump's presidential election victory, has further pressured Indian markets. *—ANI*

GOYAL ASSURES TRADERS ON GARLIC IMPORTS

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has assured garlic traders to look into their concerns over illegal imports of the agri commodity, an official said on Saturday.

A delegation of garlic traders met the minister on 10 January and highlighted difficulties faced by farmers and traders due to imports of Chinese garlic, the commerce ministry official said.

According to the traders, Chinese garlic is banned in India, but it is being brought into the country, which is hurting farmers and traders, apart from distorting the garlic market.

The traders have alleged that some imports were routed via Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq to circumvent the ban on Chinese imports.

The country's garlic imports stood at USD 7 million during April-October this fiscal. It was USD 31.4 million in 2023-24. *—PTI*

Quality of work important, not quantity: Anand Mahindra

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Weighing in on the much-debated topic of work-life balance and putting in more working hours as suggested by some corporate leaders in the recent past, Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said he believed in the quality of work and not the quantity.

Addressing the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2025 here in the national capital, Mahindra, said that the ongoing debate was wrong because it emphasises on quantity of working hours.

"I have huge respect for Narayana Murthy (founder of Infosys) and others. So let me not get this wrong, of course. But I have to say something, I think this debate is in the wrong direction," Anand Mahindra told the youth.

"My point is we have to focus on the quality of work, not on the quantity of work. So it's not about 48, 40 hours, it's not about 70 hours, it's not about 90 hours," Anand Mahindra said.

- Anand Mahindra said he always believed that one has to have leaders and people in their company who make wise decisions and choices

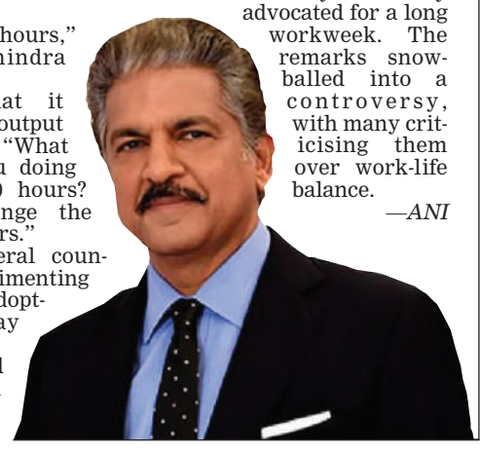
He said that it depends on the output of the work. "What output are you doing even if it's 10 hours? You can change the world in 10 hours."

Notably, several countries are experimenting with or have adopted a four-day workweek.

Anand Mahindra said he always believed that one has to have leaders and people in their company who make wise decisions and choices.

Citing an example about his auto manufacturing business, Anand Mahindra said to manufacture a car for a family one must understand the family's needs.

Infosys's Narayana Murthy and Larsen & Toubro Chairman SN Subrahmanyan recently advocated for a long workweek. The remarks snowballed into a controversy, with many criticising them over work-life balance. *—ANI*



FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

India joins UN committee on big data

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

PHOTO: X

India has joined the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD), which underscores the country's growing stature in the global statistical community and highlights its commitment to leveraging data and technology for informed decision-making.

The UN-CEBD was created to further investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals.

As part of the committee, India will contribute to shaping global standards and practices in harnessing Big Data and data science for official statistical purposes, the statement by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) said.

India's active engagement in the Committee of Experts will highlight its pioneering initiatives, including the establishment of the Data Innovation Lab and exploration of alternate data sources such as satellite imagery and machine learning for policy making.

This membership is a strategic opportunity for India to align its domestic advancements in Big Data and data science with international goals, showcasing the country's capability to lead transformative initiatives in the data domain.

Big Data and advanced data science techniques have the potential to revolutionize the production and dissemination of official statistics.

This engagement will also complement India's ongoing efforts to streamline statistical production and drive innovation in data collection, processing, and analysis to reduce the time lag in data availability, the statement said. It will also improve decision-making and provide policymakers with real-time insights for evidence-based decisions, addressing key socio-economic challenges. *—PTI*

From phones to laptops: India powers in electronics mfg

CHENNAI, 11 JAN

In a groundbreaking development for India's electronics manufacturing sector, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated Syrma SGS Technology's state-of-the-art laptop assembly line in Chennai yesterday.

This facility, located in the Madras Export Processing Zone (MEPZ), marks a pivotal shift in India's 'Make in India' journey, extending its dominance from mobile phones to IT hardware manufacturing especially the laptops.

The new assembly line will initially produce 100,000 laptops annually, with a scalable capacity of up to 1 million units within the next 1-2 years. Syrma SGS currently operates four manufacturing units in Chennai, with its Unit 3 now initiating laptop production.

Speaking at the inauguration, Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "We must work meticulously to ensure that the electronic component ecosystem is also developed in the coming time. This will not only drive a major growth story for India but also align with our vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, fostering self-reliance and strengthening our position in the global electronics manufacturing landscape."

The initiative, part of the PLI 2.0 scheme for IT Hardware, highlights India's growing capabilities in high-value electronics production and reinforces the nation's self-reliance in IT hardware.

India's electronics manufacturing sector has grown exponentially over the past decade, with total production increasing from Rs 2.4 lakh crore in 2014 to Rs 9.8 lakh crore in 2024. *—ANI*

Maharashtra, K'taka enter Vijay Hazare semifinals

VADODARA, 11 JAN

Four-time champions Karnataka held their nerves to edge out hosts Baroda by five runs, while Maharashtra outplayed Punjab by 70 runs to enter the Vijay Hazare Trophy semifinals here on Saturday. Teenager Arshin Kulkarni struck a composed maiden List A century, while wicket-keeper-batter Nitin Naik hit an explosive unbeaten fifty to power Maharashtra to a handsome win over Punjab at Kotambi Stadium. The pace duo of Mukesh Choudhary (3/44 from 8 overs) and Pradeep Dadhe (2/31 from 9.4 overs) did the maximum damage for Maharashtra, while Rajneesh Gurbani, Kulkarni, Satyajeet Bachhav and Azim Kazi bagged one wicket each in a complete show by Maharashtra. Padikkal, Prasidh seal Karnataka thrilling win vs Baroda —*PTI*

Bhutia advocates 'Sports First' in education

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

Former Indian football team captain Bhaichung Bhutia has called for a transformative shift in the country's education system, emphasising the need for a more sports-oriented curriculum to nurture future world champions. Speaking at the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue and National Youth Festival, Bhutia expressed concern that India's current education policies prioritise academics over sports, limiting the potential to produce world-class athletes. Bhutia stressed the need for collaboration between the ministry of education and the ministry of youth affairs and sports to revamp the curriculum. Sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated the festival. The former captain also lauded the government's efforts on hosting the event—*PTI*

Championship medallist Nishant turns professional

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

World championship bronze medallist Indian boxer Nishant Dev has turned professional, bidding adieu to his amateur career. One of the most consistent Indian boxers in recent times, Dev, who represented India at the Paris Olympics, has signed with Eddie Hearn and Matchroom Boxing. The 24-year-old will make his professional debut at The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas on 25 January. His opponent is yet to be announced. The event is headlined by a super middleweight bout between Steve Nelson and Diego Pacheco. The two-time National champion is being trained by former professional boxer Ronald Simms. With his move, Dev follows the footsteps of Olympic bronze medallist Vijender Singh —*PTI*

Rybakina opposes WTA ban on coach Vukov

MELBOURNE, 11 JAN

Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, said Saturday she disagrees with the WTA Tour's decision to provisionally suspend her longtime coach, Stefano Vukov, and reiterated that she never made a complaint about him.

"I always said that he never mistreated me," Rybakina said at a news conference the day before the start of the Australian Open, where she was the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka two years ago. Rybakina, who is seeded No. 6 in Melbourne, characterized the whole thing as "definitely not the ideal situation" as she prepares to compete in the year's first Grand Slam tournament, and said she objected to comments made by "some coaches," mentioning Pam Shriver by name. Rybakina announced right before last year's US Open that she no longer was working with Vukov, then said ahead of this season that her new coach would be Goran Ivanisevic —*PTI*

Gambhir, BCCI to review Australia Tour

Selectors led by Agarkar will also pick Indian squad for Champions Trophy

MUMBAI, 11 JAN

The future of leading batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be discussed threadbare in a meeting that head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief selector Ajit Agarkar is scheduled to hold with BCCI officials to review the recent tour to Australia here on Saturday.

The back-to-back series defeats against New Zealand (home) and Australia (away) and the diminishing returns with the bat have put Kohli and Rohit under scanner.

The PTI has learned that the powers that be will discuss in detail the future plan — whether to activate the transition switch from next month's Champions Trophy or wait for the cycle to end with the ICC marquee event.

Though it's likely that the senior batters will get another chance to redeem themselves at the ODI Champions Trophy,

India Head coach Gautam Gambhir PHOTO:X

a format in which they have always excelled.

They may also take into consideration the fact that both Kohli and Rohit have played just three ODIs in 2024 after the 2023 World Cup at home, and that could be too light a sample size to make a final call on their 50-over career.

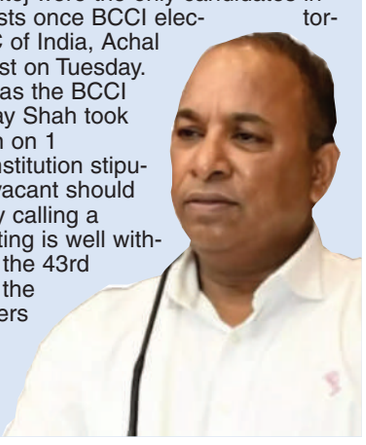
However, their Test future is different. The next assignment is an away five-match series against England, and the mandarins will certainly assess the drying runs from Kohli and Rohit in the traditional format.

- The back-to-back series defeats against New Zealand (home) and Australia (away) and the diminishing returns with the bat have put Kohli and Rohit under scanner

Similarly, it is possible that the performance of the Gambhir-led coaching staff too could be assayed, and asked about their vision to handle the transition period without any more hiccups. Apart from the review meeting, the selectors, led by Agarkar, will also convene on Saturday evening to pick the Indian squad for the Champions Trophy. —*PTI*

Saikia, Bhatia to be officially named as BCCI secy & treasurer

Devajit Saikia and Prabhtej Singh Bhatia will be officially elected as the BCCI secretary and treasurer respectively during the Special General Meeting (SGM) here on Sunday. Saikia and Prabhtej were the only candidates in the fray for the vacant posts once BCCI electoral officer and former CEC of India, Achal Kumar Joti finalised the list on Tuesday. Saikia has been working as the BCCI interim secretary since Jay Shah took over as the ICC chairman on 1 December. The BCCI constitution stipulates that any post lying vacant should be filled within 45 days by calling a SGM, and Sunday's meeting is well within that period, holding on the 43rd day. While the election of the two important office-bearers is the main point on the agenda, Shah will attend the SGM as a "special invitee." —*PTI*



3RD ODI MATCH

SL beats NZ by 140 runs, but Kiwis win series

AUCKLAND, 11 JAN

Asitha Fernando and Maheesh Theekshana shared six wickets as Sri Lanka bowled out New Zealand for 150 runs in 29.4 overs to win the third one-day international by 140 runs here Saturday.

Fernando took 3-26 and Theekshana 3-35 to jointly knock the top off the New Zealand innings as it chased 291 for victory. Eshan Fernando also contributed 3-35 as Sri Lanka completed a comprehensive victory.

New Zealand won the three-match series 2-1 in its last matches at home before the ICC Champions Trophy begins in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates next month.

Earlier, Pathum Nissanka made 66 in an innings of two parts as Sri Lanka compiled 290-8 after choosing to bat first. New Zealand then slumped to 21-5 inside seven overs as Fernando helped Sri

Lanka unpick the New Zealand top order.

"It's a huge confidence boost for me and for the team as well because we haven't played well in the first two games. It's a pleasure to play like this," Fernando said.

Mark Chapman was the only New Zealand batter to stand against the chaos, making 81 at a run a ball. Chapman's 51-run partnership with Nathan Smith (17) for the eighth wicket was New Zealand's hope of making a game of it. The run rate never got away from New Zealand but it lost too many wickets early to seriously challenge Sri Lanka's total. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India eye another complete performance to seal ODI series against Ireland

RAJKOT, 11 JAN

Following a commanding performance by the youngsters in the opening match, India will eye another clinical display from them to seal the three-match series when they face Ireland in the second women's ODI here on Sunday.

Despite fielding a relatively inexperienced side, Indian women enjoyed a perfect day in the first ODI, registering a six-wicket win to take a 1-0 series lead.

Captain Smriti Mandhana continued her fine form, laying the foundation with a forceful 41, while the efforts of Pratika Rawal and Tejal Hasabnis, who shared a 100-plus partnership to steer the chase, were crucial.

Their performances are a big boost for the team, especially with regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur missing from the lineup after she was rested for this series.

Pace spearhead Renuka Singh, the highest wicket-taker in the previous series against the West Indies, was also rested for this series.

In her absence, young Titas Sadhu stepped up, striking in her first spell. Sayali Satghare also impressed, taking a wicket, while Saima Thakor bowled a tidy 10-over spell.

Spinner Priya Mishra had a notable outing with two quick wickets, and vice-captain Deepti Sharma also played her part.

Mandhana, who had previously captained India against New Zealand, managed the inexperienced squad in excellent manner, and the management might be pleased with the bench strength ahead of home ODI World Cup this year. —*PTI*

Jamwal beats youth star Vanshaj, enters quarters

BAREILLY, 11 JAN

Himachal Pradesh's Abhinash Jamwal pulled off a major upset, knocking out former Youth World champion Vanshaj Kumar, while Shiva Thapa and Sachin Siwach continued their dominant run to sail into the quarterfinals of the 8th Elite Men's National Boxing Championship here on Saturday.

Jamwal defeated the 2022 youth champion Vanshaj of the Services with a decisive 5-0 victory in the 63.5kg category.

Representing Assam, the former World Championship bronze medalist, Thapa, showcased his skills as he eliminated Himanshu Sangwan with a clean 5-0 win in the 60-65kg category.

Former World Youth Champion Sachin Siwach delivered another stellar performance, defeating Kingson Pukhrambam of Manipur by the same margin.

Alongside Sachin, Hitesh Gulia (light middleweight),

PHOTO: X

Deepak (welterweight), Jugnoo (cruiserweight), and Vishal (heavyweight) delivered commanding wins, maintaining Services' stronghold in the championship.

Punjab's Gopi ended Govind Sahani's impressive streak with a Round 3 victory in the flyweight division.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh's Bhanu Prakash stole the show with a powerful knockout win over Goa's Umesh Chavan. —*PTI*

Satwik-Chirag lose Malaysia Open semis

KUALA LUMPUR, 11 JAN

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's impressive run at the Malaysia Super 1000 badminton tournament came to an end following a straight-game loss to Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae in the semifinals, here on Saturday.

Seeded seventh, Satwik and Chirag, who reached the finals last season, lost 10-21 15-21 in a 40-minute semifinal clash.

"They played really well, and we could have followed our game plan a bit better. Instead, we played some random strokes, but kudos to them for playing a solid game," Satwik told reporters.

"Today, the pace of the game was very slow compared to the last three days. It's part of the game. It was a valuable learning experience for us. It is disappointing, but we have a long way to go. Today's match showed that we can still make it a good fight."

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty PHOTO: PTI

The Asian Games champions struggled to get the right start and trailed 6-11 at the break in the opening game. Despite their efforts, the Indians could not make a comeback as Kim and Seo wrapped up the first game in just 19 minutes.

Satwik, who hasn't competed much after the Paris Games due to injuries, said a little more attitude and mind games could have helped against their opponents.

Satwik and Chirag haven't played much badminton since the Olympics.

They will next lead the home challenge at the India Open Super 750, starting 14 January. The Indian pair will face Malaysia's Wei Chong Man and Kai Wun Tee in the opening round —*PTI*

ITF: MAAYA WINS FIRST SINGLES TITLE IN A YEAR

NEW DELHI, 11 JAN

India's Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi won her first singles title since December 2023 when she rallied to edge past Ekaterina Tupitsyna in an intense girls singles final at the ITF J300 event, while Donghyon Hwang emerged as the boys champion here on Saturday.

The 15-year-old Maaya pipped Tupitsyna 3-6 7-5 6-2 in a gruelling contest at the DLTA Complex.

Tupitsyna began with a bang, putting the home favourite on the backfoot. However, the Indian showed tremendous grit and effected a turnaround to force a decider.

Maaya had won a title in Pune last year. —*PTI*

ISL: Mumbai seek redemption, Jamshedpur eye top two

Mohammed Kaif PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI, 11 JAN

Title holders Mumbai City FC will look to regain their footing at home when they face Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League here on Sunday.

The Islanders are determined to recover from a disappointing home defeat and will aim to avoid back-to-back losses at the Mumbai Football Arena for the first time since early 2023.

Mumbai City FC have lost two of their last five matches at the Mumbai Football Arena, including a 0-3 defeat to NorthEast United FC on December 30, 2024.

The last time they suffered consecutive home losses was in early 2023.

The Islanders enter the match with concerns over their defensive structure.

After maintaining an impressive run of four consecutive clean sheets, Mumbai City FC have now conceded multiple goals in back-to-back matches -- a worrying trend that head coach Petr Kratky will be eager to address.

Jamshedpur FC, with a poor away record this season, on the other hand will seek to break their streak of four consecutive road defeats and keep their momentum alive as they push for a top-two spot.

Meanwhile, sixteen-year-old defender Mohammed Kaif, a product of Zinc Football Academy, has secured a five-year contract with 2021 Indian Super League champions Hyderabad FC.

Born to former Santosh Trophy player Mohammed Sayeed, this transfer marks a significant milestone for the promising young talent from Makrana, Rajasthan. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2025

All set for Alcaraz and Sinner rivalry

MELBOURNE, 11 JAN

As preparations for the Australian Open ramp up, Carlos Alcaraz is focused on refining his game, particularly his revamped service motion.

The 21-year-old Spaniard recognizes the significance of his burgeoning rivalry with fellow young star Jannik Sinner, stating that Sinner's success pushes him to improve. "With him winning titles and ranking highly, it drives me to practise harder each day," Alcaraz remarked ahead of the tournament. "Having such a great rivalry forces me to give my best."

Alcaraz and Sinner, 23, are at the forefront of men's tennis as they enter the 2025 season, each holding two Grand Slam titles from 2024. Following the retirements of Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, the spotlight shifts to these two competitors alongside Novak Djokovic, the last member of the sport's legendary Big Three.

PHOTO: X

Sinner, the defending Australian Open champion and US Open winner, concluded the previous season with a remarkable 73-6 match record but faced doping allegations, which he has since denied. Meanwhile, Alcaraz fell short in the Australian Open quarterfinals last year but secured titles at both the French Open and Wimbledon. The tournament begins with heavyweights, including former major finalists Alexander Zverev, who faces Lucas Pouille, and Aryna Sabalenka going up against Sloane Stephens.

Alcaraz and Sinner will start their campaigns on Monday, with Alcaraz on track to become the youngest male player to achieve a career Grand Slam if he triumphs in Melbourne. Their head-to-head rivalry boasts Alcaraz's lead of 6-4, with stakes higher than ever for both. —*PTI*

David returns as Everton manager during 'pivotal time'

LIVERPOOL, 11 JAN

Everton hired David Moyes for a second stint as manager at the Premier League club on Saturday.

Moyes replaces Sean Dyche, who was fired Thursday with the team just one point above the relegation zone.

The 61-year-old Moyes managed Everton from 2002-13, during which he led the Merseyside club to the 2009 FA Cup final and four European campaigns.

"It's great to be back," Moyes said. "I enjoyed 11 wonderful and successful years at Everton and didn't hesitate when I was offered the opportunity to rejoin this great club."

The storied club — a nine-time English champion which has been without a major trophy since 1995 — was bought last month by the Texas-based Friedkin Group in a deal reportedly worth in excess of 400 million pounds ($495 million).

Everton's next game is Wednesday at home against Aston Villa in the Premier League.

Dyche was fired hours before Everton hosted and beat third-division Peterborough 2-0 in an FA Cup third-match. —*PTI*